



DOCTOR OF EDUCATION (EDD)

The fall and rise of the Arabic language: A discursive analysis of the impact of Arabic language initiatives of the United Arab Emirates

A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Education

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Award date:
2020

Awarding institution:
University of Bath

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**The fall and rise of the Arabic language:
A discursive analysis of the impact of Arabic language
initiatives of the United Arab Emirates**

Amani Batakji-Chazy

A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Education

University of Bath

Department of Education

January 2020

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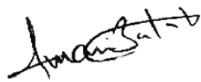
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This research inquiry was made possible with the thoughtful and professional guidance and support of my primary supervisor, Dr Trevor Grimshaw, who challenged and fine-tuned my research journey. My secondary supervisor, Dr Janina Iwaniec, did not miss an opportunity to question, support and offer resources throughout this research. Both Trevor and Janina provided all what it takes for the necessary conversations to happen. I extend my appreciation to all the hard-working professors at the Doctoral College at the University of Bath for the professional learning that they provided during the past six years.

A special and warm expression of gratitude goes to my mentor and friend who walked with me through this rough and joyful journey, since the very early stages of the Ed.D program, Professor Hanada Taha. She put up with my anxieties and frustrations throughout the critical stages of completion of this research inquiry, providing the listening ear and the pat on the back. I pay loads of appreciation and gratitude to my all my supportive colleagues at the Knowledge and Human Development Authority who have been understanding and encouraging. I extend my sincere gratitude appreciation to all the participants in this research inquiry who got out of their way to respond to my requests and accepted my invitation to be interviewed, opened up, contributed valuably and helped develop my thinking in this work.

This research could not have been possible without the precious support of my closest family members. I pay sincere thanks and deep appreciation to my husband Sam, who has been my number one supporter since I took the decision to dedicate a substantial amount of our family time and effort to completing the requirements of the Ed.D program. He has been a huge advocate of this topic and in fine-tuning the final focus of this research, as well as producing the developed visual work of the figures featured in this research report. Warm hugs and thanks go to my little girls, Luna and Mila, who had to put up with me and compromise their quality time to allow me to study during most weekends.

Last but not least, I dedicate this research to my Mama, Khayrieh, who always encouraged me to challenge myself, and had to travel very often from Lebanon to babysit my girls while I would be busy writing or away attending my university courses. A huge MERCI goes to my two sisters, Nancy and Raissa, and my brother Abdul Rahman who never missed an opportunity to lift me up and provide the necessary support.

ABSTRACT

Over the past decade the government of the United Arab Emirates has led several initiatives to revive and strengthen the Arabic language at the educational, cultural, and regulatory levels. These initiatives were influenced by popular narratives about the challenges to Arabic learners in the usage of their mother-tongue, the diluted presence of the Arabic language in public space, and the relative lack of macro-level language policies in the UAE and the Gulf region more broadly. The government initiatives have sought to bring about a revival of Arabic language discourse in the public, educational and policy spheres.

Using a post-structuralist approach to the analysis of policy discourse, this study investigated the perceptions and problematizations of the recent Arabic language initiatives (ALI) of the UAE with a view to identifying the implications for the curriculum and pedagogy of the Arabic language.

Data were gathered by means of 29 semi-structured interviews, following the '*What's the problem represented to be*' framework (WPR) proposed by Bacchi and Goodwin (2016b). A discourse-historical analysis (DHA) approach was then used in order to interrogate the underpinning concepts of the Arabic language policy which impact on teaching and learning.

The findings suggest that the Arabic Language Initiatives of the UAE are political drivers that contributed to raising the profile of the Arabic language, yet they were not perceived to have filtered through the system sufficiently to affect learners' pedagogical experiences in the language. The data reflects a perceived policy practice gap reflected in the absence of an Arabic language education policy and an ambiguous regulatory landscape. The implications of this research bring to the fore new pathways for the development of Arabic language policy, pedagogical practices and curriculum planning in the UAE. In addition, the study suggests implications for the agenda of Arabic teacher preparation and the Arabic language content in public and virtual space.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

ADEK	Abu Dhabi Education and Knowledge
ALI	Arabic Language Initiatives
CDA	Critical Discourse Analysis
DHA	Discourse-Historical Analysis
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
KHDA	Knowledge and Human Development Authority
L1	First Language Learners
LAS	League of Arab States
MOE	Ministry of Education of the UAE
MOI	Medium of Instruction
MSA	Modern Standard Arabic
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UNESCO	United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization
WPR	What's the Problem Represented to be

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Context and Rationale of the Study

This study is concerned with addressing a series of initiatives that were led by the government of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to strengthen the presence and use of the Arabic language and improve its status. It is conducted in the UAE where these initiatives were announced over a span of ten years and are still ongoing. I designate them in this research inquiry as the Arabic language initiatives of the UAE, ALI (Appendix D) for the purposes of analysis.

In their effects and implications, the ALI do not constitute a text authored by the government of the UAE per se. The ALI constitute a landscape of texts, actions, practices, speeches, and discourses that set the dynamics of a new reality and knowledge (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016b), or “form of truth” about the Arabic language in their effect and implications. The gradually emerging initiatives, the ALI of the UAE, were envisioned to make their way through social, economic and educational systems in the country (See Appendices D & I).

A number of factors aligned to form the impetus of this research at professional and personal levels. First, the context of my professional work in the area of educational regulations and school evaluations in Dubai, UAE, presented an array of occasions to interrogate the achievements of the Arabic language for L1 learners. The weekly school visits, which are the core of my work responsibilities, were fertile opportunities for interacting with teachers and school leaders and discussing learners’ progress and competences in the Arabic language. This kind of work mobilized the need to investigate how the constantly growing discourse about the Arabic language is operating at the level of learners. There was a need to establish links between what is happening at the level of political decision making and what is seen in terms of learning outcomes. This situation continued to increase my curiosity to explore the role of the ALI, and how they are seen at the operational level.

On the other hand, I was personally trying to come to grips with the scenario of being an Arab speaking parent raising her daughters in Dubai. As typical of many

other Arab families, our children use the Arabic language only at home, and within the confines of the very few Arabic language lessons that the private school provides. I was curious to learn how language policies can be improved to affect or slightly change this reality of children living in an Arab speaking country and who cannot speak their supposed L1 language. The factors that come into play to affect the speakership of Arabic clearly go beyond the influence of policy and regulation influence. The socio-cultural factors that surround many children of Arab families living in an Arab country like the UAE, immerses them in a language, mainly English, that is not their first language. This situation, which may seem complex, raised a flag of warning when I was thinking of the future of our children's speakership of the Arabic language, and hence motivated this research.

1.2 Key Literature

The Arabic language is the native language of more than 400 million Arabs around the world (Al Fahham, 2017). The Arab world countries constitute the geographic area between the Arabian Gulf and the Pacific Ocean, joined by this common history of religious and political legacies (ibid). The Arabic language is the official language of governments of all 22 Arab countries and members of the League of Arab States (lasportal.org, 2019). The people of this strategically significant Arab world, with all its natural oil resources, speak numerous dialects, giving the Arabic language a particularity in the context of world economy (Al Fahham, 2017). This position of Arabic has social impact on the millions of Arabs who live and interact with non-Arab speakers all over the world (Suleiman, 2003).

Arabic is the language of a civilization and the language of the religion of Islam, exemplified in its utmost literary forms in the Holy Quran (Abanmi, 2017). It is also in a significant cultural and literary legacy of poetry and prose from the pre-Islamic era (Abanmi, 2017; Suleiman, 2003). The prominence of the Arabic language in the UAE fluctuated over time as a result of post-colonial political and historical developments, paralleling socioeconomic, and demographic changes (Boyle, 2012). As is the case in most Arab countries, the federal constitution of the UAE, in Article 7, stipulates that Arabic is the official language of the nation, and

additionally, Article 6 stresses the national identity of the federation and its belonging to the Arab world (UAE Federal Government, 1971).

On December 18, 1973, the General Assembly of the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) endorsed Arabic as one of its official languages, to become the sixth United Nations Organization (UN) working languages besides English, French, Spanish, Russian and Chinese (UNESCO, 2017). All consecutive decisions prior to and following that date reflect acknowledgement of UNESCO of Arabic as an international language that can disseminate knowledge from the Arab countries and Arab speakers globally.

The United Nations Organization (UN) has been leading initiatives, since 1966, to position Arabic on equal footing with other world languages, including projects to translate books, provide simultaneous interpretation of all United Nations assembly proceedings and use Arabic in UN conferences held in Arab speaking countries (ibid). A program was started in 2005 to expand the use of Arabic at the institutional level at the UN and develop its digital content since the beginning of the decade (Dewachi & Aita, 2012). Today, the UNESCO and the Arab speaking countries and communities around the world annually celebrate December 18th as the Day of the Arabic Language (UNESCO, 2017).

1.2.1. The Perceived Decline in the Arabic Language in the UAE and the Region

The Arabic language has indeed made progress towards becoming an official world language by the UN. This comes undoubtedly after efforts and hard work from entities, stakeholders, authorities, and individuals who have interest in the investment in the Arabic language. However, there is a concern echoed in the literature about a perceived decline in the usage of the Arabic language in the Arab world, primarily by the speakers of the language (Abanmi, 2017; Al Issa & Al Dahan, 2011; Arab Thought Foundation, 2012; Boyle, 2012; Taha-Thomure, 2008). The UAE is no exception. Interestingly, the responses of governments to the Arabic language situation are modest and have little impact to date (Arab Thought Foundation, 2012; Taha-Thomure, 2008).

In the UAE, the Vision 2020 highlights and emphasizes the learning of Arabic and the improvement of learners' ability to reconnect with their identity and heritage (Vision 2021, 2010). In spite of this emphases, the profile of the English language

still seems to be dominating in most private institutions of Education, at school or university level (Baker, 2017). Baker explains how the UAE, recognizes a decline in the Arabic language, as is the case in most Arab countries, and have only recently acted on this concern through its vision and strategic plans. In addition to this, Baker (2017) highlights a renewed interest of the media in the UAE about resurgence to the native language as a key aspect of the nation's growth and development, roughly around the year 2010, just around the date when the ALI started to be launched. This interest can be linked to a renewed global interest in the Arabic language as an aftermath of the 9/11 events (*ibid*).

In connection with the perceived decline of the Arabic language competence in the UAE, the attention of policy makers was drawn to the results in the Program for International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS 2011 & PIRLS 2016). This well-established international benchmarking test measures the reading and literacy capacity of fourth graders in their native language (PIRLS, 2016). The levels of UAE students on this test came as an alert and focused policy level attention on reading literacy, particularly on reading in both languages. The most recent results in PIRLS 2016 mark a commendable improvement for the Emirate of Dubai compared to their results in 2011 (PIRLS 2016), but the overall score for the UAE remains insufficient compared to other countries in the world. As a consequence of these standardized test results, the government of the UAE started raising the profile of Arabic language education at varied levels.

School inspection reports from the Knowledge and Human Development Authority (KHDA), the government authority responsible for the evaluation of private schools in Dubai, reflect significant weaknesses in Arabic for first language learners in private schools (KHDA, 2019), meaning that a larger proportion of the Emirati students are not getting sufficiently effective Arabic language education, whereby their counterparts in public schools are getting a more immersive Arabic language experience. There is lack of evidence around the evaluations of the outcomes for Arabic instruction in public schools at the moment, apart from the most recent PIRLS (2016) results. There are currently no segregated statistics that accurately identify the number of Arab speaking individuals including both Emirati nationals and other Arab residents in the UAE.

Given this picture, the debate continues among scholars at a global level as to whether a decline in a national language is alarming. Some views suggest that the

Arabic language is not actually at risk. These views describe what we are currently witnessing as a phenomena of language change or evolution, that is mainly linked to cultural and social transformations due to globalization forces (Calvet, 2018; Chew, 2010). Calvet (2018) questions the concept of national languages being at risk. He explains that these are all part of political discourses that cannot accept the concept of prevalence of English. In his argument, he critiques the concept of the prevalence of English and suggests that this is temporary and part of the mentioned language evolution process, providing examples from North America where English may become less utilized and dominated by Spanish (ibid). However, his attempt to generalize this metaphor to other languages and parts of the world is questionable. There are other factors that fall outside his line of argument about speakership of Arabic as a mother-tongue language that are worth investigating.

Regionally, new resolutions and regulations were endorsed to standardize the use of the Arabic language in official institutions, and more conferences were held regionally to bring forth the Arabic language agenda, which is a positive step forward (Arab Thought Foundation, 2012). Al Fahham (2017) argues that there are factors that prevent Arab countries from investing in the Arabic language, which are the inability to make Arabic fully the language of commerce, culture, health and other economic areas in every single country. In spite of the difficulties, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) made a response to the Arabic language concern through their Vision 2021.

1.2.2 Briefing on the Regulatory Landscape in the UAE and the Launch of the Arabic Language Initiatives (ALI) of the UAE: A Series of Recent Government Driven Initiatives to Raise the Profile of the Arabic Language

In the UAE, the Ministry of Education (MoE) is a federal authority that governs the regulations for both public and private schools (MoE, 2019). In each individual emirate, there is a distinct regulatory authority that closely oversees the operations of private sector schooling within their area of jurisdiction. The Abu Dhabi Department of Education and Knowledge (ADEK, 2019) regulates the execution of the laws and policies of the MoE in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi, while the Knowledge and Human Development Authority operates with the same purpose in Dubai

(KHDA, 2019). Similarly, in Sharjah, a recent launch of the Sharjah Private Education Authority (SPEA) was instituted with a similar purpose (SPEA, 2019).

The public schools accept only Emirati's from K-12, and the language of instruction in these schools is Arabic for all phases whereby English is taught as a second language and used for teaching technical and scientific subjects (UAE Federal Government, 2019). The curriculum decisions are planned centrally for all subjects for public schools, while in the private sector, schools make their own decisions about their language of instruction, through their licensing process in each individual emirate (*ibid*).

At the level of curricula, there are curricular differences that affect the provision of Arabic between public and private schools in the UAE. Government schools are known for their immersive Arabic language curriculum in the basic education phases (*ibid*). However, in 2015, one of the reform projects was introduced, *Madaress Al Ghad* (meaning Schools of Tomorrow) whereby a select number of public schools teach the sciences and mathematics in English, in an attempt to improve graduating students' outcomes and prepare them for university education (Ridge, Kippels, & ElAsad, 2015). This reform program was ended in 2015 (*ibid*). On the other hand, according to the Ministry of Education regulations, in private schools, English or other foreign languages are the languages of instruction, whereas Arabic receives a more limited time allocation (MoE, 2019). The mandatory number of lessons allocated for Arabic range between 4 and 6 per week (*ibid*). Until the time of conducting this research, it is mandatory for all students who have an Arab passport to learn Arabic as a first language for a specific, but limited, number of lessons, per week (MoE, 2019).

As for the teachers of Arabic, they are native Arab speakers from the region, mainly from countries such as Syria, Jordan, Egypt and Lebanon. The teachers of Arabic have to be holders of a relevant qualification of Arabic language arts or literature to be permitted to teach Arabic for L1 learners. This is not mandatory for teachers of Arabic for non-Arab learners (KHDA, 2019). Currently, the teachers of Arabic, for a number of years, had to go through a verbal and written examination process at the KHDA of Dubai to assess their competence and approve their qualifications before being allowed to assume their post as teachers in private schools (KHDA, 2019). Currently, at the federal level of all other Emirates, teachers of Arabic, like all other teachers, have to go through a rigorous "Teacher Licensing"

process involving screening and the complication of a professional portfolio, to be permitted to teach in the UAE, in both the public and private sectors (MoE, 2019). Most teachers of Arabic in public schools are Emirati teachers and one third of them are of other Arab nationalities (Ridge et al., 2015).

Amongst initiatives in a variety of educational sector strands, the UAE established an integrated strategy for transforming the country into a centre of excellence for the Arabic language, through the Arabic language charter (Emirates 24/7, 2012) The charter, launched in April 2012, reflects a clear call for strengthening the links to Arabic:

Our national identity is integrally linked to the Arabic language, which serves as an effective medium to express our values, culture and heritage. Promoting the language will enable our future generations to connect with our roots, society and values more effectively (ibid)

It is worthy to note that, in light of the UAE's efforts to strengthen the Arabic language, and in relevance to the context of this research, the UAE is still witnessing a striking education boom driven by a fast progressing and developing private education sector. The private school sector is reported to grow exponentially, where the population of students in Dubai specifically, over the past decade has reached 90% of the total schooling system (KHDA & Dubai FDI, 2016; Ridge et al., 2015). The private schools currently outnumber the public schools especially in Dubai (Ridge et al., 2015).

With this context in mind, the government of the UAE rolled out a number of Arabic language initiatives (ALI) for improving the use of Arabic by the natives of the language. The policy documents describing such initiatives are documented mainly through the media or through official executive council decrees. The key information around them is publicly available online. There is a gap in the knowledge, however, about the detailed contexts of every individual initiative, apart from what is available online from second-hand sources.

What is clear is that ALI are linked to the promising *UAE national agenda* that sets out national priorities for achieving the vision 2021 (Vision 2021, 2010). It is a comprehensive policy and strategy document that includes domains addressing all relevant economic sectors (Vision 2021, 2010), including education.

The execution of the national agenda targets involves massive funding, as suggested in the quoted text. The targeted Arabic language improvements come

under the umbrella of the *national agenda* as iterated in the text below of the Vision 2021:

“Education is a fundamental element for the development of a nation and the best investment in its youth

For that reason, the UAE Vision 2021 National Agenda emphasizes the development of a first-rate education system, which will require a complete transformation of the current education system and teaching methods. The National Agenda aims for all schools, universities and students to be equipped with Smart systems and devices as a basis for all teaching methods, projects and research. There will also be significant investments to promote and reinforce enrollment in preschools as this plays an important role in shaping children’s personalities and their future.” (Vision 2021, 2010)

What follows is a concise briefing of the fairly recent ALI that are related to broader national targets. The Arabic language charter is a core driver of the ALI. It is “an integrated strategy to establish UAE as a global centre of excellence for the Arabic language,” (Emirates 24/7, 2012).

Following the issuance of the Arabic language charter (Emirates 24/7, 2012), the UAE Council of Ministers constituted an advisory council for the Arabic language, to strengthen and disseminate the use of the Arabic language in innovative ways, based on best practices in the implementation of language policies (UAE cabinet). The function of the council is to design a policy to articulate best practices for disseminating and teaching the Arabic language, based on a number of understandings and core principles, highlighted in a document entitled “Al Arabiya lugha lil Hayat” meaning, “Arabic for life,” (Arabic for Life, 2013). The committee is constituted of a team of highly acknowledged experts in the Arabic language and pedagogy nationally and internationally lead by Dr. Farouk Al Baz, a renowned space scientist, geologist and Arabic language expert (*ibid*). It is based on a study about the status quo of the Arabic language teaching and language, supported by critiques and recommendations from experts about best practices that need to be implemented for effective Arabic language pedagogy in the UAE. The committee for *Arabic for Life* produced a report that targets audiences interested in Arabic language teaching in the UAE, including speakers and non-speakers of Arabic (*ibid*, 2013).

November 20, 2016 marks a significant starting point for ALI whereby the government of the UAE endorsed the national reading law (uaecabinet.ae, 2016a).

The law outlines a reading policy and promotes the engagement of all institutions and entities nationwide in the pursuit of reading. Consequently, the year 2016 was announced the *Year of Reading* and marked the beginning of the *decade of reading* (Gulf News, 2015). This initiative is partially a step towards the improvement of the teaching of reading in educational institutions. In other non-educational institutions and corporate entities, it means that there should be a focus on reading by every individual at an institutional level, as a key to literary growth and professional development (*ibid*, 2015).

The Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum Global Initiatives (MBRGI) is the entity that launched the Mohammed Bin Rashid Arabic language Award. This award is designed for individuals, entities, and governments to enhance the Arabic language, locally and internationally, and support the teaching of the Arabic language. It is chaired by a team of renowned experts in the field, and applies rigorous selection and review criteria (MBR Global Initiatives, 2019).

With a similar rationale, the *Arab Reading Challenge*, the largest Arab literacy initiative was launched by HH Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum. It is designed to involve all Arab youth and engage them in reading and in developing their critical reading skills. The prize of the challenge, which is a significant amount of money, goes to those who have read 50 books in Arabic during one given school year in the UAE and internationally. The evaluation of contestants involves a rigorous and phased process managed by a high-level committee of experts in the Arabic language. This reading challenge has been taking place over several years since it started, and is engaging increasing numbers of participants every year from different Arab countries (Arab Reading Challenge, 2019).

Three of the ALI went through the planning phases but did not yet get executed. The first is the “Dictionary of Mohammed Bin Rashid of contemporary Arabic” is an ALI to be launched for consolidating the improvement of the Arabic language competence nationwide (Bin Houereb, 2015). The idea is to create a digital reference that reduces the gap between classical Arabic and spoken Arabic, that serves as a key reference for all academicians and educators interested in the Arabic language.

The second ALI, that is still on paper, is a translation college that was founded under the sponsorship of the Mohammed Bin Rashid College of Communication at the American University of Dubai, to serve as a regional hub for all the activities involving the translation of the bodies of knowledge, sciences and literature in the region

(Ibrahim, 2016). This work is supposed to feed into the Arabic knowledge content database.

The third of these is a department for the teaching of Arabic to non-Arab speakers was constituted in Zayed University, a major UAE public university, operating in two campuses in the UAE. The institute is the first of its kind that was established in collaboration with specialized universities around the world. The purpose is to respond to the increasing demand for learning Arabic internationally (Ibrahim, 2016). However, this project did not progress beyond the planning phase.

With the objective of enriching the Arabic language body of knowledge, the UAE, through the Mohammed Bin Rashid Policy Council, took the lead on developing the Arabic online digital content, in an initiative supervised by the government of the UAE, through the communication and information technology fund. The initiative aims to enhance the Arabic language content, programming tools and platforms that support the Arabic language on the internet (*ibid*, 2016). There is no accurate online data to reflect the impact of this initiative.

A cyber initiative to use the hash tag “#Bilarabi” meaning “#inArabic” launched by the Mohammed Bin Rashid Foundation, was started and used to promote the use of the Arabic language digitally, engaging individuals as well as governments, in the UAE, to use the Arabic language on social media platforms on the *Day of the Arabic Language*, on 8 December every year (Bil Arabi, 2019). The initiative does not specify whether the language used is colloquial or the MSA.

Last but not least, HRH Dr. Sultan Bin Mohammed Al Qassimi, the Ruler of the Emirate of Sharjah, issued a royal decree for launching the *Society for the Protection of the Arabic Language*. This Sharjah-based entity aims to preserve Arabic language through workshops, language courses and competitions. Its purpose is to document the Arab heritage, disseminate the Arabic language and publish dictionaries (Arabic Language Academy, 2016; Zakzak, 2017).

I will end this section with two government regulations that fall under the government efforts to preserve the Arabic language. The first falls under a specific remit of KHDA, that I came to know about by virtue of my capacity as a senior bilingual inspector for 6 years. The KHDA is keen on supporting the Arabic language for the past 10 years since its establishment, through several means. They have established that Arabic is a key subject to be inspected in schools and reported on it for every school in Dubai when visited by KHDA. Part of this regulations is to the

effect that any improving school cannot be rated as *Outstanding* if the Arabic subject in it is rated below *Acceptable*. These steps impacted the quality of teaching of the Arabic language in private schools in Dubai over the past years, as evident from the KHDA published school inspection reports (KHDA, 2019). The second regulation is federal law number 2/12 year 2008 that requires all UAE government institutions to use the Arabic language exclusively in all its written communications (Emaratallyoum, 2008). It is common knowledge that this regulation is taking effect and currently being implemented in all government entities in the UAE.

1.3 Research Gap

Raising the profile of the Arabic language in the UAE was iterated in a number of other Arab countries. The literature features a number of initiatives in other parts of the Arab world and internationally led by independent non-governmental bodies or individuals, some of which are funded by Arab governments, or international organizations.

Some of the efforts across the Arab world are intended to focus on the cultural aspects of the language and produce research work around cultural topics. Others focus on producing operational projects that affect the teaching and learning of Arabic. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia started the King Abdullah Initiative for Arabic content, planned and executed in collaboration with the City of King Abdullah for Science and Technology (kaica.org.sa, 2019). The efforts culminated in decisions of the 19th Arab summit, some of which included enhancing the Arabic Wikipedia content and the translation of 2100 books, with the purpose of contributing to the Arab knowledge economy (ibid). Another example of an Arab effort to impact the partly the teaching and learning of Arabic is the Arab Thought Foundation (ATF). It is an independent regional non-governmental organization with the mission to support the Arab body of knowledge and preserve the Arab identity through cultural, educational and language policy research projects (ArabThought Foundation, 2019). The ATF is led by a board of trustees constituted of distinguished figures from all Arab countries, which make it identifiable as a regional Arab world organization. The *International Council of the Arabic Language* is another initiative founded by *United*

Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) to support the research work on the Arabic language in the region (Al Arabiah Council, 2008).

To date, the literature does not feature any research work addressing the problematizations of such initiatives critically and their potential in making changes at the level of policies of the Arabic language. Apart from this study, there is no research investigating the Arabic language initiatives (ALI) of the UAE that promote the use of Arabic by its natives. This research is foundational in its focus because it sets the scene for interrogating the ALI, through analysing the ways in which they are perceived, their problems, and their implications.

The participants in this research are experts in the field of Arabic language, pedagogy, research, and policy planning. All 29 participants in this research were selected purposefully because of their track record and expertise in the field of the Arabic language and education, as well as their knowledge of the context and culture of the UAE. They were selected purposefully, as detailed in Chapter 3, in order to have a valuable contribution to responding to the research questions of this study. The participants are balanced in terms of gender and come from various Arab nationalities and include a couple of Emirati participants. Of the 29 participants, two are non-Arab, but I selected them because they have a vast experience of working in the UAE with significant involvement in the area of Arabic language curriculum research and development.

1.4 Aims of the Research Inquiry

In this research inquiry, I join the discussion about the perceptions of the discourses of current Arabic language initiatives, taking the UAE as an example, in light of the perceived situation of the use of Arabic by its native speakers.

This research will critically analyse the existing Arabic language initiatives, ALI of the UAE, and question their perceived problematizations. I also analyse the ALI texts discursively. All the data sources combined are intended to propose possible next steps for policy makers and relevant public and private institutions in impacting real changes in the situation of the Arabic language. The study will further address the implications of the discourse of ALI on the pedagogy and curriculum provision of the Arabic language in the context of the UAE.

1.5 Research Questions

I have started this research inquiry with one set of research questions. After the study developed, I realized that the ones herein are my actual research questions, reflecting the real aims that I found out during the course of the study.

The research inquiry was driven by the following research questions:

RQ. 1: What do the participants perceive to be the key features of recent initiatives for Arabic as an L1 in the UAE?

RQ. 2: What do the participants perceive to be the major problems with these initiatives?

RQ. 3: What discourses can be identified within the ALI texts and subjected to critical analysis from the perspective of the researcher?

RQ. 4: What are the policy implications from the participants' perspectives for:

- a. Curriculum planning for Arabic as L1?*
- b. Methodology for the teaching of Arabic as L1?*

1.6 Summary and Preview of the Structure of the Thesis

This chapter was intended to contextualize my research inquiry project. It introduced and briefly explained the context of the Arabic language initiatives (ALI) in the UAE. A gap is identified in the lack of knowledge about the discourse problematizations of the recent Arabic language initiatives in the UAE. The discussion that followed explained the debate about whether the Arabic language is at risk, as is the case of some other national languages around the world, in response to globalization.

The chapter drew on key literature that examined the status of the broader Arabic language initiatives in the Arab countries and internationally. The findings of this research inform the next steps in any future efforts that address the challenges of the use of the Arabic language.

In Chapter 2, I review the literature for a description of the context of Arabic in the UAE, and a discussion of the key concepts that pose challenges to the use of the Arabic language. The literature addresses other language policy theories, notions and concepts that help problematize the ALI. I draw on the role of the Arabic language in the context of the UAE, and factors that led to the emergence of ALI. The chapter establishes definitions of key terms for this study. I link the context of

ALI to relevant literature related to the Arabic language from a policy perspective. Finally, I establish links to examples of relevant language policy discussions internationally, to develop a comparative view and highlight gaps in Arabic language policies.

After that, in Chapter 3, I present the methodology for conducting this research inquiry. The chapter discusses the research strategy, design, methods and procedures. The chapter features a description of the data collection tool driven by the conceptual framework of critical discourse analysis employing each of the Carol Bacchi's "What's the problem represented to be" (WPR) framework for critical discourse analysis, and the discourse-historical approach (DHA) of Ruth Wodak (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016b; Wodak, 2011). The chapter includes a detailed discussion of the quality criteria that were used for this research, as well as the ethical considerations that guided the entire research process.

I will then go on in Chapter 4 to present a thematic data analysis of the major findings from interview data. The analysis is guided by CDA methods using the WPR framework. The approach used integrates the findings from different questions under broad key themes. The content of this chapter summarizes the participants' views about the implications of ALI and the proposed alternatives to the problematizations reflected in the CDA. The conclusions of this chapter focus on a policy discussion of the challenges of the Arabic language, from the perspectives of the interview participants.

In Chapter 5, I present a critical discourse analysis of the interview texts and a sample of ALI texts through the perspective of the WPR conceptual framework. I additionally present the detailed analysis I conducted of most of the ALI texts using discourse-historical analysis (DHA) approaches. Both stages of critical discourse analysis I conducted, address the issues and uncover the underpinning concepts of the perceived problematizations of ALI.

Finally, in Chapter 6 I interpret the findings and discuss the contributions of this research inquiry. I organize the discussion at several levels of conceptualization, culminating in a suggested model for policy intervention. I extend the discussion to the implications, and the limitations of the findings of this research inquiry that render it not suitable for generalization to new contexts. I conclude the chapter with major recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction to the Literature Review

The purpose of this chapter is to critically review the knowledge from the existing body of literature that relates to the topic of this research inquiry. The chapter begins with a brief discussion of what literature I considered particularly valuable to my research, and what knowledge was excluded from this literature review, while providing my justifications. I also highlight the value of the literature discussed and its role in providing a better positioning of this research and its findings.

The chapter provides an overview of the status and role of the Arabic language for first language speakers in the Arab countries and in the UAE in particular. It describes the context that led to the government supported Arabic language initiatives (ALI) witnessed across the UAE during the past decade. Further to that, I link the context of ALI to scholarly literature focused on the Arabic language policy and planning as perceived by governments, and salient issues that contribute to the status quo of the Arabic language, with views on international language policy perspectives.

Furthermore, I discuss some of the challenges of the Arabic language teaching and learning, after which I clarify certain definitions of key terms as they are used in the context of the Arabic language for the purpose of resolving ambiguities in this research. I discuss notions of relevance to language policy and planning, and critical theories that situate the analysis of the ALI. I include a discussion of some ambiguities in the literature in regard to this research topic. I conclude the chapter with a discussion of how the conceptual framework of critical discourse analysis acts as a driver for this research inquiry.

2.2 Inclusion and Exclusion of Literature

I selected the works cited in this review based on primary relevance to the discussion of the Arabic language for L1 speakers and learners, in the context of ALI, both at policy level and at the levels of teaching, learning and curriculum

implementation. I initially identified relevant works by using both English and Arabic key word searches, on scholarly websites, and from my professional judgment about particular authors and the level of their authority in the field. The primary library of sources, at the policy level, included all the documents that relate directly to the ALI. None of these were excluded unless they repeated statements about the same initiative.

I selected other parts of the literature based on their relevance to the issues around the Arabic language as they are related to the key research questions. These were identified from a limited set of resources, with a number of well-known authors. Only authors that discussed the Arabic language at a policy level and linked it to other aspects of social interaction and pedagogy were included. Other discussions that focused on the history and development of the Arabic language from a linguistic perspective were excluded due to their irrelevance to the focus of this research. The only resources included were those that addressed diglossia of the Arabic language without going into further depth.

I sought a balance between the Arab and Western literature. Most Arabic academic work that was related to this research was used, missing only a few when they were dated. It is important to note that the amount of existing Arabic literature that is related to this research inquiry is modest. The Western literatures included also European literature due to the relevance and comparability of the Arabic language to other existing European languages, and the voices in recent published works were evidence to this relation. When a European source existed in an Arabic-translated version, I opted for the Arabic translated publication, obviously for ease of access to the information.

2.3 Context of the Arabic Language: Factors that Set the Scene for the Arabic Language Initiatives and the Relation to My Own Research Inquiry

This section critically examines the state of the Arabic language highlighting the Emirati context and regionally relevant language policy issues. I present a broader look at what may have been achieved at the same policy level in Arab countries with focus on contextual differences.

2.3.1 The UAE Context of the Arabic Language Education

Since its inception as a federal government in 1971, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) witnessed the fastest growing educational sector in the region (Gallagher, 2019; Ridge et al., 2015). In her edited book, Gallagher (2019) presents the changes in the educational landscape since the constitution of the UAE building on key research. She highlights that research has been insufficient around the idea of how the field of education has grown over the years in the UAE (ibid). This work concludes that progress in the growth of education in the UAE has been remarkable over a short time span of its development (ibid). For example, from schooling provided by an Imam of local mosques back in 1970 to the current highest number of English-speaking international schools in the world (Warner and Burton in Gallagher, 2019) the UAE made significant transformations in its educational growth. The selection of research and analytical papers comprising this book address developments at the k-12 level, private and public schooling, special needs education, as well as at the higher education level (Gallagher, 2019). Today the UAE, hosts a range of internationally known higher education universities including the Sorbonne University and the University of New York in Abu Dhabi (ibid). Relevant to this impressive timeline, the fact that in 1940, 48% of adults in the UAE were illiterate, while today 98% of adults are literate stands out (ibid). As comprehensive as it may be, the book of Gallagher (2019) did not directly address issues around Arabic language policy or Arabic language issues in education. One paper in the book, by Taha (2019) presented the Arabic Language Initiatives in the UAE as factors that raised the profile of Arabic, but concluded that there still remains an urgent need for all the Arabic language scholarly and practitioners community to look for research based solutions to raise the standards of Arabic literacy (Taha-Thomure, 2019a).

Modern standard Arabic (MSA) is the language of instruction of all schooling systems in the Arab region, and the language of formal communications, through media or print. The UAE has a particular demographic context that is distinct from that of other Arab countries. Any statistical information that I include here briefly is useful for understanding the context of the Arabic language speakers and learners in the UAE. The UAE nationals comprise only a minority, in their own country, an equivalent of 1.4% out of a total population of nearly 9,304,277 in 2017 according to

the Federal Competitiveness and Statistics Authority (UAE Federal Government, 2017). Arabic language teaching is compulsory in UAE schools for both Arab and expat residents. The Emirati nationals who go to government schools are 288,794, while a larger majority who go to private schools are 810,537 (MoE, 2019).

2.3.2 *Roots of English Prevalence Leading to the Emergence of ALI*

The United Arab Emirates has flourished over the past 40 years in ways that have not been envisaged (Davidson, 2005; Ulrichsen, 2016). Rising up from *Shaykhdoms*, better known as *the Trucial States*, the UAE gained its independence from the British mandate in 1971 after a series of treaties that were signed culminating in the federation as we know it today (Ulrichsen, 2017; Zahlan 2016; Davidson 2005) ending a phase of 151 years of British domination (Zahlan, 2016). Most of the discussions and research sources I reviewed link the social, political and cultural development of the UAE to the oil boom and the role of the international key players in the region at the time (Davidson, 2005; Ulrichsen, 2017; Zahlan, 2016). The post-oil phase in the UAE witnessed social, political, cultural and demographic developments that clearly triggered extensive multi-faceted research about the UAE (Al Abed & Hellyer, 2001; Ulrichsen, 2017).

Interestingly, in her book, Zahlan (2016) warned against any research analysis that only focuses on the oil boom era, while ignoring the pre-oil dynamics, which she thought had an unavoidable role in many of the areas of growth of the UAE as we know it today. The cultural values, traditions of governance and social dynamics played a key role in the constitution of the federal government of the UAE (Zahlan, 2016), especially in relation to defining its identity, and hence the language models that we experience today. Streaming from this discussion, the Arab region, and the UAE is no exception, developed with high levels of external dependence, mainly on expatriate residents (Al Hussein & Gitsaki, 2018; Davidson, 2005).

The dynamics of the dependence on expatriates and their implications closely contribute to the current language policies in the region as a whole and in the UAE in particular. Al Issa & Al Dahan (2011) in their book chapter discuss the prevalence of English and the ways it threatens the Arabic language in the UAE. They argue for the view that, in the UAE in particular, English is more of a need than in other countries in the region, if the country continues to seek advancements in its

innovations and modernization (Al Issa & Al Dahan, 2011). However, in their view there is a danger that English is becoming a second language than a lingua franca (ibid). However, in their view there is a danger that English is becoming a second language than a lingua franca (ibid). In their analytical paper, the authors send a call to policy makers to consider bilingualism as a reasonable language policy option for schools and universities in the UAE (ibid). The period during which this article by Al Issa and Al Dahan (2011) was written marks the early days of the appearance of the ALI in the UAE. The inherent message about drawing the attention of policy makers to the declining situation in the use of the Arabic language was in its early days at the time when we look at nearly 10 years back in time. Along these lines, Karamani (2005) describes a project of industrialization that was turning the region around, calling for an urgent need to procure 'culturally sensitive' TESOL teachers whereby "English was widely becoming identified as a powerful tool in facilitating the region's course to modernization," (Karamani, 2005, p.92). He rightly continues to illustrate how the prominence of English and the rising investment in the English medium education in the region contributed to alarming levels of deficiency in the competence of Arabic (Karamani, 2005). Similar to others, as mentioned previously, he attributes this problem, citing a report by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) published in 2003, to the absence of national language policies in the region (Karamani, 2005), a view supported by (Al Hussein & Gitsaki, 2018).

There are some root causes as to why Arab speakers have historically been inclined to favour the English language. (Calvet, 2018) and (Chew, 2010) argue that non speakers of English gravitate towards the English language because of its dominance and the context of its speakership. The tensions resulting from the enforcement of the English language during colonization have had implications on the peoples of colonized countries (Canagarajah, 2005). They have been yet recovering from the state of colonization through affirming their nationalism and identities, while at the same time they were trying to come to grips with globalization and the pressing need to embrace English for the betterment of their societies (ibid). This process is identified as a feature of *imperialism* where colonial dominance in developing countries has contributed to marginalizing national languages with the purpose of prioritizing the colonial language (Phillipson, 2009).

Looking back at these root factors, and looking ahead, the next section critically discusses current policy directions for the UAE. Closing this line of thinking,

it is worthy to note that there are quite some reasons for the reluctant investment in an Arabic language policy in the Arab countries. In his paper, Al Fahham (2017) summarizes those as challenges including differences dialects, and cultural, social and political differences across Arab countries. His study concludes that investing in the Arabic language is more valuable than many other forms of investments in material resources (Al Fahham, 2017). According to Karamani (2005), the issues that require careful planning, include but not limited to, the Arabization of a massive body of knowledge and the planning for a national language policy that is reliant on home-grown resources and the development of a bilingual model, that seem to be "...long drawn out affairs that for the time being at least were best shelved to be pursued later once a degree of modernization had set in" (Karamani, p.93, 2005).

2.3.3 Existing Arabic Language Policies and How this Reality Links to the Wider Context of the Region and International Best Practice

Given the above discussion, a few questions seem to be emerging as to what language identity does the UAE have, and whether or not a national Arabic language policy exists. As a result of these reflections, educators would logically ask what language education policy is in effect. The responses to these questions can situate the discussion around ALI in the larger UAE policy picture and can help establish links between these and the wider scholarly literature around language policies in the Arab region and internationally. The responses to these questions are partially grounded in formal policy around language education in general, and mostly in the realities of how such policies are enacted.

There are other suggested policy alternatives for the UAE including *bilingualism*. Clarke identifies *linguistic dualism* as an approach to language policy in the UAE (Clarke, 2007). As he explains in his paper, the UAE operates with the mindset of Arabic being the language of identity, religion, and cultural legacy as reflected in official formal language policies of the country, such as the one cited above. On the other hand, the UAE has adopted an English language policy in the context of modernity and internationalism (ibid). At the moment, the UAE is setting the scene for a bilingual policy that is still in the early phases of its development in the K-12 sector, amidst a debate in the UAE society about how this model will be supported without posing a threat to the use of the Arabic language (Zakzak, 2017).

There are other explanations for the prevalence of English in the UAE that can be understood in the context of *neoliberalism*. The UAE, like other Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, subscribes to the concept of 'human capital' and the desire to develop its *knowledge economy* as a way to keep up to speed with globalization trends (Barnawi, 2018), and to realize its aspirations vision 2021 (Vision2021.ae). The way neoliberalist practices have filtered through the market economies of the GCC countries remain insufficiently researched according to Barnawi (2018). It is clear, however, that these countries have committed to agreements with international organizations such as the World Bank for financial and economic consultations and developmental services (ibid), a view supported by (Phillipson, 2009). It follows that the education sector, and the drive towards international and/or Western education, as evident in the visible expansion of the private school sector, is the country's pathway of choice for the betterment of education outcomes in the UAE, especially that 78% of Emirati nationals opt to go to private schools. This situation does not seem to be in conflict with the explicit government's focus on the development of the public school system in the UAE and its inclination towards making the bilingual model successful (MoE, 2019).

Along the same vein, Tsui and Tollefson (2014) in their analytical article discusses how language policies affect the access and equity in education, citing case studies and examples from a range of Asian countries. Education policies, in their opinion, play crucial roles in influencing education quality because such policies affect the learning ability through language, as well as filter through the way books, materials, assessments and other language related aspects of education have to be planned and designed (Tollefson & Tsui, 2014). The Arabic language is a case in point of early and emergent literacy learners who may be exposed to a new language, even though they would have acquired several varieties of that language, that are essentially not in line with the standard language that is assumed by policy makers to be the standard variety (ibid).

In these authors' opinions, globalization discourses have had implications on educational access through curricula that value the sciences and technology over the liberal arts and social sciences (Tollefson & Tsui, 2014). Also, globalization results in replacement of teacher created tests with standardized testing as well as de-skilling of teachers where teachers are operating in curriculum driven and high stakes assessment-controlled curricula (ibid). One of the three interesting

conclusions, that this analysis draws, is that the promotion of MOI mother tongue policies can be done through formal legal frameworks, such as the Arabic Language Charter in the case of this research.

The effects of such implicit language policies that favor English in lieu of Arabic require careful thought. Troudi and Al Hafidh (2017) discuss the implications of the lack of proficiency in Arabic for mother tongue learners. They explain how Arab students are faced with a “*double burden*” when they are forced to study key school subjects in a language other than their mother tongue, which is established and known as a key challenge by research (ibid). Their argument is that students are at a disadvantage when they are expected to achieve in school disciplines in a second language medium of instruction, which is also taking energy out of the way of their learning of their native language (ibid). Their assumptions agree with the assertions made by Tsui and Tollefson (2014) who highlight the struggle with mother tongue medium of instruction (MOI) when learners need to transition to higher education or to employment. Their access to their mother tongue won’t necessarily get them through to higher education (Tollefson & Tsui, 2014).

In line with the views already presented, Troudi and Al Hafidh (2017) address the reasons for the hegemony of the English language in the gulf region, and stress that Arabic is at a disadvantage, obviously because of historical events that favoured the advent of English as a lingua franca (Troudi & Boukadi, 2017; Troudi & Al Hafidh, 2017). More importantly, this is linked to deficiency of clear language policies that regulate the language of instruction at school levels in most of the gulf countries (ibid). Troudi & Al Hafidh (2017) address the challenge of overcoming the prevalence of English in the Gulf region, especially in the UAE, at the expense of learning Arabic. The authors argue that the concern is not about acknowledging the decline in the Arabic language in countries like the UAE and other Gulf region countries, but in enacting contradictory regulations in the education system that are not in line with the evident overall policy direction of valuing the mother tongue. In their argument, the authors discretely propose a policy opportunity through suggesting viewing Arabic from a renewed perspective as being a language that supports the future and the accommodates advancements in the sciences (Troudi and Al Hafidh, 2017). All this, according to them, is reliant on some policy moves at the levels of curriculum, teacher training and educational policy as a whole. The authors in this analytical paper rightfully call for the need to reconsider the status of Arabic, especially in the

UAE, and re-assess how the current policies are actually affecting the achievement and proficiency of students particularly the Emirati's (ibid). This work aligns with the direction of this research in analysing existing policy initiatives (ALI) and considering potential future policy steps.

Similarly, there are views within this debate in the UAE about whether Arabic will survive the hegemony of English and at the same time uphold the Emirati culture and nationalism in its society (Davidson, 2005; Zakzak, 2017). The question that authors raise is what policies the GCC countries still need to design next to achieve the balance between competitiveness in English and retention of the sense of national and linguistic identity through Arabic (ibid). Zakzak (2017), in a policy brief published by Mohammed bin Rashid School of Government, discusses the prospects and challenges of developing bilingualism policy models in the UAE, in light of the perceived decline in the use of the Arabic language. In this paper, she explains how the notions of globalization and diglossia constitute challenges towards planning for bilingual education models, while at the same time highlights them as opportunities (Zakzak, 2017). She argues that there need to be rigorous teaching and learning reforms including professional development of teachers, drawing on comparisons with the experiences of countries like Singapore (ibid). She proposes strategies for regulating and institutionalizing *bilingualism* as a formal language model for the UAE (Zakzak, 2017). The brief proposes to transform the current discourse around Arabic from one that looks pessimistically at the situation of the Arabic language to one that encourages knowledge and advancement through *bilingualism* (ibid). Interestingly, this paper highlights the key and crucial determinants for the improvement of the policies needed for the Arabic language. Much of the discussion raised is relevant to this research inquiry and worth noting and emphasizing at a later stage.

Along similar lines, Troudi and Boukadi (2017) stress that a language policy in the UAE has to be planned and thought very seriously at several levels before taking action. It is valid to question whether *bilingualism* is a policy option for the UAE, and respectively for other GCC countries that are dealing with the reality of prevalence of English and are keen to reaffirm how they value their nationalism through the Arabic language. It appears that the UAE language policy landscape is primed to support a bilingual language model at a national level (Gallagher, 2019; Zakzak, 2017). The signs of this policy did filter into the k-12 education scene. In 2009, the establishment

of a new centre for bilingual education at one of the main national universities in the UAE, Zayed University, was announced ("UAE Center for bilingualism and bilingual education," 2009). With all the symbolism that this higher education institution carries, as a national university in the UAE, the centre is meant to be a research entity in the field of bilingual and multilingual education, a think tank for language policy planning. This aspirational centre, although it secured funding, did not yet get off the ground.

In 2011, a new education plan was launched for implementing *bilingualism* in public schools, spearheaded by the Department of Education and Knowledge in Abu Dhabi (ADEK) to implement English as an additional medium of instruction in government schools, alongside Arabic. Mathematics and the sciences would be taught in English, while social sciences, Arabic language and Islamic education will be taught in Arabic (Gallagher, 2011). O'Sullivan (2015) was critical of the impact of this policy choice. In her study, O'Sullivan (2015) explores the perspectives of English native and Arab teachers of high school level about the reform project spearheaded by ADEK to improve students' outcomes in English and interrogates the degree of success of the implementation of this reform. As evident in her study, she concluded with an implementation gap between the decision and the reality of students' levels and capacity to perform in a *bilingual* medium of instruction (O'Sullivan, 2015). This new approach to public schooling was meant to develop students who are competent equally in both English and Arabic (Gallagher, 2011; Zakzak, 2017). Gallagher (2011) stresses that the implications of this choice are worthy of further research as the two scripts in question, English and Arabic, are distinct. The findings from O'Sullivan provide another confirmation that a language policy decision without thoughtful planning of language choices, may result in damaging outcomes on both short and long term. The evidence that she provides again support this reality, when she highlighted that students results in PISA 2011 were a case in point.

There are some looming challenges towards realizing *bilingualism* models in the UAE. A recent analytical paper by Cook (2017) attempts to assess the UAE language policy choices, with a review of the impact of the Arabic language charter on the use of Arabic in science and technology in the context of the UAE (Cook, 2017). Cook questions the capacity of the educational system of the UAE, both in public and private sectors, to fully realize a status for the Arabic language as a

language of science and for the future, as aspired in the Vision 2021 and the Arabic Language Charter. In his critical paper, Cook (2017) analyses all policy choices already made that affect the development of the Arabic language. He is rightfully critical of the lack of appropriate curricular infrastructure that is already in place for Arabic language education, to be able to achieve excellence in Arabic as a language in science (Cook, 2017). He argues that to achieve these targets, the UAE needs to re-consider their curricular regulations and choices at early stages of education and language of instruction choices in tertiary education (ibid). Cook (2017) supports the direction towards having a bilingual language education policy that can meet the growing demands of the country, with a realistic view of establishing more solid grounds in the Arabic language education. When such view is considered reflectively it agrees with some of the assumptions brought forward by Troudi & Al Hafidh (2017) and broadly, Fehri (2013). Therefore, strengthening the Arabic language can be a concern when we consider the educational policies currently in place in the UAE that practically hinder the prevalence of Arabic. This is particularly true when the natives of Arabic, especially Emiratis, make conscious linguistic choices in their educational and professional lives (Cook, 2017).

The Arab Thought Foundation conducted a milestone research project to assess the current status of the Arabic language and to suggest a pathway for language policy planning in the Arab region (Arab Thought Foundation, 2012). The project included 9 field study surveys that were designed and analysed by a team of experts in the field, and lead to a series of recommendations along key areas of impact. In relevance to this study, I will cite what is pertinent from the key impact areas, namely the language planning area for k-12 education and higher education. Some of the key recommendations include the call to Arabize all instructional key subjects contents from K-12 basic education curricula, and Arabize the instruction at higher education level, in order to emphasize the competence in Arabic (Arab Thought Foundation, 2012). However, this may not be a fully viable approach for the context of the UAE and requires thoughtful reflection. The agency of the Emirati's and their attitudes towards the English language may be an obstacle towards a decision to shift the language of instruction in the sciences to Arabic.

Abdul Kader Fehri (2013) agrees with some of the views and recommendations concluded in the study by the Arab Thought Foundation (2012), in terms of favouring Arabization at basic and higher education levels, and using the

foreign language to support Arabic, as an inevitable option for preserving nation state identity through the Arabic language. The approach he suggests seems to be a balanced one that is closer to bilingual models. It is a common view that power, ideology and political decisions are the factors that sustain a language, and saving the Arabic language has to be political through strategic planning (Fehri, 2013; Troudi & Al Hafidh, 2017).

This discussion suggests that there is absence of an explicit policy for the Arabic language in the Arab world region in general and in the UAE in particular (United Nations Development Program, 2003; Karamani, 2005; Fehri, 2013; Troudi & Al Hafidh, 2017). The UNDP (2003) report explains that, in a region where knowledge economies are emerging, the Arabic language is in a crisis. The report proceeds to explain that the lack of a policy for the Arabic language at a national level in Arab speaking countries markedly weakens language centres and significantly diminishes their resources and impact (UNDP, 2003).

Closing this discussion, I will briefly present below what is in place at a regulatory level in the UAE, that will influence Arabic language policy directions. With the growth of the private sector in education, the government of the UAE was motivated to institute decentralized regulatory bodies in each Emirate, tasked with improving the quality of education, operating independently from the Federal Ministry of Education, but enforcing the implementation of its regulations and curricula. For example, and as mentioned briefly in an earlier section, in Dubai, the government independently-funded Knowledge and Human Development Authority (KHDA) takes up the responsibility of regulating and inspecting the private school sector. In Abu Dhabi, the Department of Education and Knowledge (ADEK) is instituted to regulate and inspect both public and private schools in the Emirate. Similarly, Sharjah Private Education Authority (SPEA) supports private schools in the Emirate of Sharjah. The Ministry of Education has jurisdiction over all public and private schools in the UAE except for Abu Dhabi.

All of these entities operate under the umbrella of the federal Ministry of Education but report directly to their respective local governments in the individual emirates in which they are instituted. These authorities have evidently raised the standards of educational practices of both the Arabic and the English languages in the UAE, as seen for example from the publicly published KHDA inspection reports (KHDA 2019). What specifically relates to this discussion is that these authorities are

implicitly making sure that the national curricula of the UAE, namely Arabic and Islamic education are taught at a high standard in private schools and comply with the MoE mandate. These entities want to ensure that crucial national subjects are not dismissed or diluted within international curricula of private schools, where most Emirati learners go. The role of KHDA will be detailed in the next subsections as part of the government initiatives to improve Arabic language learning. The point that needs to be made here is that this part of the policy structure of the government, for instance, the KHDA, allowed for further emphasis on the teaching and learning of the Arabic language. This information is common knowledge in the UAE, and the details of its execution are known to me personally by virtue of my professional position.

It can be established that the UAE has emphasized the importance of the English language through its educational sector, and at the same time managed to focus on the Arabic language partially through its policy structure, but not yet sufficiently well. At the end of the day, English is still the prevalent lingua franca of the UAE that permeates the daily life and the public space and constitutes part of the identity of its vast private school sector (Zakzak, 2017).

The policy attempts to raise the profile of English in the public schools are obviously happening at the expense of Arabic, as the number of instructional hours of the Arabic language have decreased, to allow for additional English instructional time (Al Baik, 2008). At the moment, some curricular revamps are starting to take place in the Arabic language to feature literature-based approaches from grade 9 upwards (MoE, 2019), yet emergent literacy in Arabic language curricula seems to be lacking. The main national higher education institutions in the UAE are mandated to deliver all their courses in English (MoE, 2019).

There seems to be no clear links between current Arabic language education policy decisions at the K-12 education level and the higher education level mandates. The exit qualifications from high school to university in relation to Arabic language competence are to be questioned. Currently, the Emirates Standardized Test (EMSAT) was recently designed and administered for high school graduates who opt to join universities locally in the UAE, or for those who need to obtain equivalencies of their high school diplomas, if they choose to work in a public post in the UAE. These tests include Arabic as a key assessed subject. The results of the past two years of EMSAT have not been analysed publicly yet to inform the quality of teaching and learning of the Arabic language at K-12 level, or to be used as

evidence of any links between k-12 education and university level preparation as far as the Arabic language is concerned. The vision of the UAE stresses that Arabic is its formal language of religion, culture, and identity, while the practice on the ground seems to be yet supportive of the prevalence of English.

In conclusion, the Arabic language policy is in need for a transition from the realm of wishful thinking to action and implementation. Research around Arabic language policy decisions and impact of existing decisions are deficient. The policy practices suggest reactive approaches rather than objective research-based motivations for policy. In this section, I have clarified that there has been a response to economic post-colonial needs that took the language policy in many Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries in one direction, the choice of English. Over time, it turned out that the decision to raise competence in English had implications on the competence in Arabic, and then it turned the attention of policy makers once again to raising the profile of Arabic. This was seen in the UAE and in other Arab countries where a number of efforts and initiatives emerged with the same purpose. These will be discussed in a subsequent section of this chapter.

2.4 A Critical Reading of the Challenges and Issues Related to the Current Status of the Arabic Language

This section will focus on some of the main challenges that any discussion about the Arabic language needs to raise. These challenges mostly impact the way the Arabic language is taught and learned, and therefore, putting them at the forefront would help the reader understand the factors that are at play, and normally that affect the outcomes of learners of Arabic and users of Arabic for communicative purposes.

2.4.1. Arabic Diglossia and the Standardization of the Language: a Briefing on Key Terminology

The Arabic language status is highly affected by *diglossia*, researched and defined as the situation where two varieties of the same language exist and are spoken within the same speech community (Fehri, 2013b; Ferguson, 1958). Ferguson stresses that a *diglossic* situation of one language may develop in ways

different from other traditionally *diglossic* languages. Arabic, according to him, exemplifies a situation where the *classical* Arabic, has remained relatively stable over the years (Ferguson, 1958). Ferguson uses the terms *high variety* to refer to the standard form of the language and *low variety* to refer to the colloquial or regional dialect (*ibid*, 1958). Wahba (2006) argues that Arabic is even a *multiglossic* language, with the rationale that the interaction between the high and low varieties that Ferguson describes has created a continuum of varieties (Wahba, 2006). *Diglossia* is a term that will be often referred to in the discussions with participants in this research, in the context of the challenges faced when learners first acquire the Arabic language at a young age.

The standardization of the use of the Arabic language created an ideological debate over the years. These ideological issues are linked to the notion of *nationalism* and how the Arabic language is the language of a number of nations rather than one defined country. The sense of ownership or nationalistic belonging through the language extends throughout the Arab world and is not limited by the borders of one particular Arab country (Fehri 2013; Suleiman 2003). This reality has implications on each individual country and has often created issues of political tension and ideological debate. For example, in Morocco, the constitution had to be amended to resolve a national debate about the Amazigh language to be the official language alongside the Arabic language (World Constitutions Illustrated, 2011). Therefore, managing and planning for the Arabic language has to go through consensus between all the Arab countries that are official members of the Arab League, and cannot be done individually by any given country (Fehri, 2013b).

The notion of the standardization of the Arabic language is not new. During the Muslim conquests, the Arabic language standardization started (Versteegh, 2014). It became a necessity to reflect the language of an empire, where the need for uniformity arose to avoid gaps between regional dialects, to centralize the authority of the Islamic administration, and to disseminate the lexicon more widely (*ibid*). Literary classical Arabic or what is referred to as *Fus'ha* is the formal language of religion, culture, and education (Suleiman, 2003). According to Fehri (2013), the Arab linguists developed the Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) in an attempt to adapt the *Fus'ha* to a form that can accommodate emerging ideological, philosophical, and historical issues. Others believed that MSA is adapted to meet the constantly emerging needs of the speakers of Arabic (Farghaly, A; Shaalan, 2009; Suleiman,

2003). Fehri (2013) explains how the *Arab League* was able to consolidate the use of the MSA across its network of cultural and linguistic institutions, making the MSA its unified variety for communicating across the Arab countries. With this step, Fehri (2013) further argues that the Arab League succeeded in protecting the MSA and reduced the influence of the linguistic trends that encouraged formal use of colloquial and regional varieties of Arabic. The dialects or regional varieties have remained over time the means of daily informal communication of the vast majority of speakers (Shouby, 1951; Versteegh, 2014). In essence, the key roots and references for MSA continue to be the Holy Quran, and a legacy of literary publications of poetry (Suleiman, 2003; Versteegh, 2014).

Resolving ambiguities of definitions of some key terminology are relevant for understanding the status of the Arabic language as addressed in this research inquiry. These terms are often used interchangeably in the literature sources cited in this study, and therefore this section intends to ensure consistency of use (Glossary of Terms).

The Arabic language falls on a continuum of varieties of vernaculars that change according to factors such as the background of the speaker, the geographic locations, and the knowledge of the speaker of other languages (Ryding, 1991). The classical variety sits on one end of the spectrum, as the closest to the highest variety and the language of the Holy Quran (Al Khatib, 2000; Suleiman, 2003) whereby the mid of the spectrum includes the MSA, as described earlier. The uses of MSA include formal media as a language of instruction in schools and universities, language of the media including political and news reports (ibid). The term MSA will be always used hereinafter to refer to the language of instruction of the Arabic language and the formal classical variety of the Arabic language that was used during interviews with some participants in this research inquiry.

Two more key terms need to be defined. The Arab countries refers to all the 22 countries that are members of the *League of Arab States (LAS)*, the Arab organization that supports all the joint interests of the Arab countries at the political, economic, financial, cultural, healthcare, and international affairs levels (lasportal.org, 2019). All the Arab countries stipulate in their respective constitutions that Arabic is their official language (lasportal.org, 2019). There is a need to make a syntactic distinction between the term Arab countries and Arab speaking countries. The reference to Arab countries embodies issues of national identity and belonging

to an Arab nation, and hence, this identification is not limited by the fact that they merely use Arabic as their official language. Their recognition as Arab countries means that their identity is Arab, when the term Arab speaking country is used, it refers to the focus on the language spoken in this particular country. The case of the UAE is the only one where it is an Arab country by virtue having Arabic as its formal constitutional language, but Arabic may not be prevalently spoken on its land, due to its dominantly expatriate population.

2.4.2 Teaching and Learning of the Arabic Language

This section addresses the main challenges in the teaching and learning of the Arabic language in the UAE. The teaching and learning of Arabic for first language learners in the UAE, are highly linked to the regulatory scene. The curricula for Arabic are centrally designed and planned by the Ministry of Education (MoE, 2019), and therefore, the curricula and the accompanying pedagogical kit fall under its copyrights.

The *diglossic* situation of the Arabic language is significant for this discussion, because it affects the outcomes of its teaching and learning. Learners study the standard form of Arabic in classrooms and in books, while at home, they speak the colloquial low variety (Taha-Thomure, 2019b). The authors and pedagogical experts of the Arabic language initiative (ALI), entitled “Arabic for life” explain that this feature of the Arabic language, can be used positively as a point of strength in Arabic language teaching, which is not the case at the moment (Arabic for Life, 2014). However, this said, the dichotomy between teaching the MSA and the spoken vernaculars has stifled the Arabic language teaching field for years, particularly in the UAE. Professional pedagogues have been trying to come to grips with the gap between the written language of the books and the language spoken at home (Ryding, 1991), let alone having to deal with the challenges of codeswitching and/or transfer from English to Arabic, wherever English is a main language of instruction in an international school (Al Khatib, 2000).

Another key challenge for teaching and learning Arabic is the parents’ attitudes towards their priorities for their children’s language competence. Many parents whose children study in private schools undermine the value of learning Arabic, both for non-native and native Arab families (Zakzak, 2017). Emirati parents

particularly those who enrol their children in private schools, seek to benefit from a higher quality of English language education to provide their children with better work opportunities in the future (Knowledge and Human Development Authority, 2011). In spite of this, there are still native Arab families who appreciate the opportunities for their children to learn Arabic but are dissatisfied with the quality of teaching of Arabic altogether (ibid). It follows, and in connection to this particular issue, a high percentage of students who are Arab, and study in international schools, particularly in the GCC region, are compromised in their Arabic language competence, identified as *heritage students* (Z. Ibrahim & Allam, 2006).

Taha-Thomure (2019) discusses key challenges in the teaching and learning practices of Arabic in the UAE. In addition to parental attitudes, and the obvious prevalence of English, one core challenge is that Arabic language is taught in traditional ways that reflect rigid focus on grammar and usage (Taha-Thomure, 2019b). Traditional teaching and didactic approaches are a common feature of many Arabic language classroom experiences, particularly in the UAE, as reported in many of the school inspection reports of Dubai private schools, taken as an example (KHDA, 2019).

In her research paper on effective teacher education, Taha (2017) captures reasons from her review of teacher preparation programs in the Arab world and their effectiveness in preparing teachers of Arabic. Her research review covered an analysis of the quality of the teacher education programs and colleges around the Arab world through looking at their websites, quality of programs and statistics showing outcomes of their teachers (ibid). Key observations show most of these programs and colleges do not focus on the pedagogies of the Arabic language, as much as they focus on the core content knowledge of the language (Taha, 2017). The other interesting finding is that student teachers who are admitted to these programs are the ones who score the lowest on their university admission exams. What can be taken from this conclusion in connection to this research is that there are inherent factors that are contributing to the reality of the Arabic language pedagogies that we see in practice. According to Taha (2017), the burden laid on the shoulders of an Arabic language teacher is significant. Teachers of Arabic are trusted not only to teach a native language, but also build students' capacity to think, analyse and conduct debates (Taha, 2017) in a sophisticated manner using this language, as expected in the MoE curriculum standards of the Arabic language

(MoE, 2019). The paper highlights a clear policy planning deficiency at the level of Arabic language teacher training and preparation. Attaining these outcomes requires governments of the Arab world to plan for Arabic thoughtfully and think of its capacity to facilitate a move to the knowledge economy, a major recommendation from the Arab Knowledge Report (2014).

The gap in the Arabic language teaching and learning is apparently the outcome of ill-preparation of Arabic language teachers at both college preparatory and in-service levels (Taha, 2017). Faour (2012) stresses that the quality of teacher preparation in the Arab countries raises concern as to whether teachers have the know-how for enabling students to develop advanced 21st century skills such as higher order thinking, research, inquiry and problem-solving (Faour, 2012). For example, one of the gaps he identifies is about using the language only within the confines of the conventional classrooms (ibid). It is established that learning a language at a certain proficiency level requires an immersive experience with opportunities for its application in real life situations (UNDP & MBRF, 2014). However, the quality of preparation that teachers of Arabic go through focuses highly on textbook driven and context focused approaches (Taha, 2017).

The Arab Knowledge Report (2014) and Taha (2017) stress the need to give attention to the qualifications of Arabic language teachers as a prerequisite for the development of the status of the Arabic language. Very few higher education institutions in the Arab countries provide preparation in Arabic language arts, let alone the pedagogical specialization with emphasis on Arabic language teaching (Taha-Thomure, 2019b). This results in teachers lacking the required skills for teaching the Arabic language (Taha, 2017). After graduation, student teachers seeking a job may get a contract in either the private and public sector without having to go through a rigorous licensing prior to service, at least in the UAE. There is currently some work in progress on a teacher licensing process in the UAE for all pre-service and practicing teachers, which will be binding and a condition for contract renewal (Ministry of Education, 2018).

Finally, the Arab Knowledge Report iterates the need to address the developments in the Arabic language, the way it is taught and the development of its curricula (UNDP & MBRF, 2014). The report highlights the need to give attention to information technologies in the way the Arabic language is developed, and particularly at the level of Arabic knowledge online content, to increase the

language's prospects for being supportive of more developed knowledge economies (ibid).

2.5 Ambiguities in the Literature and Current Initiatives in the Arab Countries

It is valid to ask if other Arab countries brought forward initiatives that mirror the ALI of the UAE. There are current initiatives in a few Arab countries.

In Jordan, the Arabic Language Council was established as an independent governmental entity with the mission of protecting the use of the Arabic language across the country and beyond. The Kingdom of Jordan also issued an Arabic language protection law (Majma.org.jo, 2016). In the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, a centre for promoting the Arabic language knowledge, research and development was founded, entitled The King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz International Centre for the Arabic Language (kaica.org.sa, 2019).

Regionally, across the Arab world, the Arab Thought Foundation also has the mission of developing and empowering the Arabic content knowledge through various initiatives including publications of research and studies about the Arabic language, culture, and applied linguistics (ArabThought Foundation, 2019). Their levelled readers project entitled "*Arabi 21*" exemplifies a key effort, funded primarily by *King Abdul Aziz City for Science and Technology*, to standardize Arabic language pedagogy and level children's literature (ArabThought Foundation, 2019).

To date, apart from the visible impact of *Arabi 21* on resourcing the Arabic language and literature (ArabThought Foundation, 2019), there have been no published studies, to the knowledge of the researcher, that analyse the direct impact of the efforts of these organizations to support and develop the use of the Arabic language through the K-12 system of education. However, this does not negate the fact that they have produced massive publications, conferences and events, featured on their websites and known through the media that are evidence of their achievements in enriching the Arabic language knowledge and content.

It is still not clear, however, how these initiatives, efforts and projects link to existing governmental planning around the Arabic language in any of the Arab countries. The connections to a strategic vision or plan for the Arabic language are still ambiguous and do not provide a clear trail to future action or national priorities for the Arabic language.

2.6 Offering a New Perspective and New Relationships: The Conceptual Framework as a Driver for a Critical Analysis Based on Existing International Language Policy Views

It follows from the literature that it is now important to highlight the value that this research inquiry brings to the existing discussion about Arabic language, its status, its policies, and the links between these policies or government initiatives.

The conceptual value of this research inquiry lies in its contribution to the knowledge about problematizing the situation of the Arabic language through the ALI and understanding the implications of these initiatives on the educational sector in the UAE. The knowledge that emerges will establish a better understanding of the direction of regulatory decisions that have impact on the teaching and learning of Arabic at the level of both public and private school sectors. Due to the extended period during which these initiatives were launched, the initiatives are ongoing and may continue to during the course of this research inquiry.

In a previous section I established that there are no distinct Arabic language policies at the level of individual Arab countries or the level of the Arab world. There is currently a gap in the knowledge about the links between any existing Arabic language policy and/or initiatives across the Arab World and actual practice that has the effect of improving the Arabic language status, and its capacity as a modern adaptive language for learning the sciences, developing innovative skills, and supporting futuristic areas of learning (UNDP & MBRF, 2014).

When seen as a set of initiatives, the ALI of the UAE add an interesting layer to the already complicated language policy scene that is struggling between two extremes, one of tradition, nationalism and identity, and another of an ambitious thoughtful and future looking view to technology and advancement as portrayed in the Vision 2021 (Vision 2021, 2010). The outputs of these ALI may posit a new existence for the Arabic language that is challenged to develop and grow more flexibly to sustain itself in an increasingly globalized neo-liberal economy. Reports and experts call for re-evaluating the Arabic language policy and its significant role in building a knowledge economy and in education in the Arab countries (UNDP & MBRF 2014; Troudi and Al Hafidh 2017; Fehri, 2013).

2.6.1 International Theoretical and Conceptual Perspectives of Language Policy

Looking at international approaches around language policy and language planning, a recent work by Spolsky (2019) supports a view about potential and future policies for the Arabic language. Spolsky (2019) posits that a language policy is formed of three integral and interconnected components. (1) The first is the language practice, which is essentially the speech competence, the choice of language variety and the social situations in which the communication in that given language occurs (Spolsky, 2019). This process filters down from the supranational through to the nation-state and to the education system. In the context of this paper, this is similar to the context the Arab region countries, and specifically the GCC countries. (2) Spolsky (2019) identifies a second component of the policy as the language beliefs and ideologies, which are assigning values to varieties and variations in language choice by a specific group of people. Thirdly, (3) the management, or what he defines as the way the nation or institution manages the linguistic practices and the beliefs of the members of the community (ibid). We can think about the formal aspects of the Arabic language policies, or in other terms the Charter cited in this research. In his proposed model, which is a reviewed one, Spolsky (2019) suggests two key modifications. He introduced the social advocates of a language (individuals or groups who wish to change its practices as main influencer of a language policy pathway. These are what he calls “advocates without power.” Second addition, he suggests that ‘self-management’ is fifth component of the policy, and mainly when speakers of a language attempt modify their own linguistic proficiency and repertoire, including when children learn a language, and in other words, they are managers with authority (Spolsky, 2019).

When looking at this suggested theoretical model, we can realize that the context of the Arabic language policy can be understood and interpreted in light of these factors combined. It is indeed a complex but realistic picture of a wider view of the realities of the Arabic language, and the factors that are at play. The speakership of Arabic in practice has established ways in which varieties of the language are perceived and used. The issues of ideology and discourses that have influenced the use and speakership of Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) can all be seen through the lenses of ideologies and value systems that have developed over the years to

influence the ways in which an Arabic language policy is set to govern the language across different Arab countries.

The key issues underlying a model like the above are evident critical views that are considered as major mobilizers of a policy. For example, Spolsky suggests the discourses and ideologies as crucial factors that influence a policy, and this is rightly so in this research focus and discussion. The other element that is worth attention are the informal players such as the advocates of a language who are not really in power or formal positions. What is worth the attention in this model that much of its components are surrounding factors, and this again proves that language policy does not come from above, rather from within, with more influence coming from the realities of speakers of a language.

From a similar line of thought, Tsui and Tollefson (2017) in their book critically analyse the relationship between language policies in various countries in Asia and the national cultural identity. One of the key important messages is the role of the English language and how its prevalence fluctuated in these countries over time, depending on their own language policies vis a vis their individual national languages (Tollefson & Tsui, 2017). The authors interrogate how language policies are key mobilizers of the way national identities are constructed and deconstructed (Pennycook, 2002, in Tollefson and Tsui, 2017). Another key message is that language policies are the by-products of socio political influences in each country (Tollefson & Tsui, 2017).

Liddicoat (2013) in his book explains how *language planning* exists in connection with *language policy*, representing different aspects of a decision-making process for improving the way language is used by the community. He explains how language policy is inclusive of language planning which is a process for organizing language structures, variety choices, and processes in preparation for a language policy.

Liddicoat (2013) identifies and discusses four key areas of activity in language planning (as cited by Kaplan & Baldauf, 1991, in Liddicoat). The first is *status planning* involving the choices made about language varieties for specific purposes in a community, including decisions about language use in education or MOI. The second level of core activity is *corpus planning* that relates to decisions about how a language is to be codified and designed at the levels of syntax and lexicon while developing the needed resources for this process. Thirdly, *image planning* involves

the ways in which language varieties are given importance or value in a community. Fourth and last, the notion of language planning involves *language-in-education or acquisition planning* whereby the core of the teaching and learning issues seem to be addressed at this level.

Interestingly, at the level of the Arabic language, (Fehri, 2013b) argues that much of the known Arabic language initiatives at the regional level at the level of *corpus planning* as identified by Liddicoat (2013). He thinks that it is not addressed at the level of *status planning*, which in his opinion, hinders the strategic view for Arabic as a language to be protected, sustained, disseminated and maintained (Fehri, 2013b). It would be thought provoking to see how the findings of this research would be in line with or contradict this statement, if relevant.

2.6.2 The Critical Discourse Analysis Approach as a Driver

The tools necessary to study the status of the Arabic language and assess its futuristic role in a currently complicated landscape of language policies should be different. It seems that a causal model of analysis (Wodak & Meyer, 2009) may fall short of capturing all the factors that I have just discussed that are influencing the capacities of L1 learners to learn the Arabic language. I propose to use the post-structural discourse analysis approaches adopted by (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016b) and critical discourse analysis approach of (Wodak & Meyer, 2009) as tools to explore possible relationships across all the language policy levels that can result in a view of how the Arabic language is likely to develop in the context of the UAE in particular. The landscape of the Arabic language requires critical and discursive analysis and self-reflection (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016b; Wodak & Meyer, 2009).

The post structural policy approach book by Bacchi (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016b) presents a model for policy analysis that builds on some of Michel Foucault's (in Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016b) and Stephen Ball's (Ball, 2015) assumptions of ways of governing and exercise of power. The post structural understanding presented in this work assumes that governments make use of a multitude of formal and informal institutions and agencies that connect in certain ways to produce "ways of knowing" (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016b). It is a systematic model of a set of conceptual questions driving the analysis and designed to interrogate policy discourse (ibid). It can be applied to this research inquiry in connection to the ways of understanding Arabic

language policy landscape in the UAE and analysing the problematizations of the ALI.

The discourse-historical approach (DHA) perceives both written and spoken language as a social practice (Wodak & Meyer, 2009). The context in which discourses are produced and operate and shape social practices is significant (ibid). (Wodak, 2011) suggests that political *discourses* are historical and can be interpreted in connection to their context. The contextual factors of the Arabic language, specifically for this study, are represented by all the issues surrounding the teaching and learning of Arabic language as L1, language mother-tongue policies and practices, Arab identity issues of L1 learners in the UAE, and how the practice of power and culturally held beliefs affect learner's choice to use the Arabic language (ibid).

The challenges of the Arabic language for L1 are proliferated and can be critiqued at multiple layers. I had to address its use, its speakership, the context for choosing to speak it and how it is taught, and by whom etc... These all had to be factored in when analysing the Arabic language *discourse*. The DHA utilizes *interdiscursivity* and *intertextuality* as tools that help identify the level of power in a *discourse*. These aspects as defined by Wodak (2011) allow the identification of embedded relationships between all concepts, genres and fields of action that are operating within the L1 Arabic language discourse.

The issues surrounding the Arabic language for L1 are representative of a political discourse. I selected Wodak's approach because of her focus on political discourse, and for adding the view of "*historical*" contextual elements that contribute to the understanding of key issues around the Arabic language as L1. This runs along the same vein of the WPR conceptual framework of policy analysis (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016b) that guided this study. Additionally, the abductive reasoning approach of DHA created a balance with the existing deductive approach of the WPR framework, where it presented the opportunity for an ongoing interplay between the data base and the theory (Wodak & Meyer, 2009), to produce a comprehensive analysis of the issues around the Arabic language.

In addition to the core assumptions of CDA that are common to most approaches, the DHA approach is interested in *discourse* as a structured form of knowledge that is tightly linked to the development of *social practices* over time (Wodak & Meyer, 2009). This approach is closer to the socio-cognitive approach by

Van Dijk where the focus of analysis is built around the triangulation of societal context, cognition, and discourse (Van Dijk, 2001). According to Van Dijk (2001), CDA, through its focus on social problems, highlights the role of discourse in the production and reproduction of power. What that means in the context of this study is that CDA would help highlight facets of the complex context of the Arabic language vis a vis the English language in the UAE, and how the issue of dominance of English is perceived by Arabic L1 users.

In the analysis of this research, references were made to common concepts from both approaches in some parts of the units of texts extracted from the data, reflecting the eclectic nature of the DHA approach and its abductive reasoning (Wodak & Meyer, 2009). The reliance on Van Dijk's socio-cognitive approach per se falls short of the historical dimension in the analysis of the political *discourse* at hand. The historical context of the Arabic language facilitates the understanding of the salient contemporary issues that are being discussed in this research.

The references to the sub-topics, or multiple *discourses*, sometimes were better analysed from the perspective of the discourse-historical approach, to explain how different discourses within the overall Arabic language discourse were *intertextual* and *interdiscursive* (Wodak & Meyer, 2009). According to Wodak (2009), "discourses are open and hybrid and not closed systems at all; new subtopics can be created, and *intertextuality* and *interdiscursivity* allow for new fields of action" (p. 5).

While exploring the scene of the Arabic language so far, as described in this literature review, I posit that the Arabic language is subjected to key changes within the context of the UAE, and how it will eventually develop (or not) is a question to be sought through the analysis of ALI. Also, while analysing the outcomes and the implications of ALI, I will give value to all what has and has not been said equally (Fairclough and Wodak 1997 in Wodak & Meyer 2009).

What is available so far is a repeated call to focus and strategize policies for the Arabic language, as seen in this literature review. These calls have not been translated into actions at the level of unified and focused Arabic language policy direction. What is also available are significant macrolevel, government targeted assessments conducted by external organizations, with the support and funding of Arab entities, individuals, and non-governmental bodies, such as the *Arab Knowledge Report*, *The Arab Education Report Card*, and the *Arab Thought Foundation* scholarly publications that ring bells and alert to the need for re-investing

in the Arabic language and Arabic language education (ArabThought Foundation, 2019; Faour, 2012; UNDP & MBRF, 2014).

These reports and publications are useful, and they set the scene for more action oriented and targeted policy moves. From this perspective, this situation warrants that this research inquiry is useful and needed to put forth more specific and targeted proposals for a policy analysis model for the Arabic language for L1 learners.

2.7 Summary of the Literature Review

In this chapter, I discussed the context of the Arabic language, looking at broad Arabic language issues related to all Arab countries. The discussion featured a micro view of the UAE and its contextual factors influencing the Arabic language development. I proceeded with a presentation of the Arabic language regulatory context as seen in the UAE, with contextual and historical factors leading to the emergence of ALI. These factors included the perceived ideological tensions linked to the prevalence of English, neoliberal directions of the economy and existing regulations that affect the status of the Arabic language teaching and learning.

A section was dedicated to existing Arabic language policies and how this reality links to the wider context of the region. The last section of the chapter proposed different understandings and interpretations of the policy landscape, in light of language planning and policy models, and the critical discourse analysis (CDA) conceptual framework as a driver for identifying the way forward with the advancement of the Arabic language teaching and learning.

The literature review uncovered (1) key challenges to Arabic language policy making and strategic planning. These challenges are linked to historical factors and root causes for the prevalence of the English language. The literature further gave me (2) a view of significant historical factors relevant to the UAE in particular that culminated in a particular linguistic reality for Arabic vis a vis English, the language of advancement for the region. The literature also showed that (3) the contemporary language policy situation is in its early stages of recovery from the remnants of colonization and globalization. The critical reading of the current Arabic language policy helped me situate my arguments more clearly about what matters for this research inquiry and what concepts and/or assumptions to seek during fieldwork.

The next chapter explains the methodology of the research inquiry and the proposed methods for CDA through the WPR framework and discourse-historical analysis as approached (Wodak, 2011; Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016).

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY OF THE RESEARCH INQUIRY

3.1 Introduction to Chapter 3

The purpose of this chapter is to present the research inquiry objectives and its key research questions. It begins by discussing the research strategy, design, methods and procedures. The chapter proceeds with a description of the data collection tools that are based on the conceptual framework of Bacchi and Goodwin (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016b). The chapter continues with a discussion of the data analysis approach following critical discourse analysis (CDA), specifically the discourse-historical approach (DHA) by Wodak (2011).

The chapter further highlights my position in the study as a subject living and operating within the UAE Arabic language *discourse*, and hence discusses *reflexivity* as a measure of quality. This discussion extends to a detailed overview of the quality criteria that were planned and implemented in this research. The chapter proceeds with detailed notes on ethical considerations adhered to throughout the course of the research inquiry.

3.2 Research Inquiry Objectives and Questions

3.2.1 Research Objectives

As discussed in previous chapters, this research inquiry was intended to address the Arabic language initiatives (ALI) that were led by the government of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to strengthen the presence and use of the Arabic language by L1 users. Taking the UAE as an example, the implications of this study will be used to establish views on future Arabic language policies that are better linked to practice in Arabic language teaching and learning in the UAE in specific. The ALI as disseminated by the UAE government engage educational institutions at all levels as well as the wider public. They are published in the forms of texts, actions, practices, speeches, and discourses that set the dynamics of a new reality and knowledge around the Arabic language situation. Questions arise as to how they

are perceived and problematized, and therefore, how they can impact curricular and pedagogical practices in the teaching of the Arabic language in the UAE and beyond. This being said, it is important to acknowledge that these ALI are still young in terms of their implementation (Appendix D). However, there is a need to explore how they were perceived and used in practice to inform possible future language policies.

3.2.2 Research Questions

The inquiry addressed the following research questions:

RQ. 1: What do the participants perceive to be the key features of recent initiatives for Arabic as an L1 in the UAE?

RQ 2: What do the participants perceive to be the major problems with these initiatives?

RQ 3: What discourses can be identified within the ALI texts and subjected to critical analysis from the perspective of the researcher?

RQ 4 What are the policy implications from the participants' perspectives for:

- a. Curriculum planning for Arabic as L1?*
- b. Methodology for the teaching of Arabic as L1?*

3.3 Research Strategy, Design, Method and Procedures

3.3.1 Research Strategy

The qualitative strategy adopted in this study is in line with the principles of the *naturalistic* paradigm (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The choice of *naturalistic inquiry* strategy allowed me to gain first-hand insights about the perceptions of ALI from L1 practitioners and from language experts in the field mostly from within the UAE. I employed practices common to qualitative approaches, to answer the main research questions, namely semi-structured interviews for data gathering following the post-structural policy analysis model (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016b).

One advantage of a qualitative approach in this study was that it allowed me to form critical and interpretive understandings and representations of ALI (N. K. Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). The understandings were actively constructed by the participants in the study during the interview discussions (Cohen, Manion, &

Morrison, 2007a). The key assumption was that the reality about the perceptions of ALI is socially situated and data is context driven. The participants' claims underwent interpretive processes to unpack the multiple layers of their constructed perceptions (ibid).

In this process, I adopted the notion of *human as instrument*, being a subject living in the UAE Arabic language discourse (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Hence my values influenced the interpretive process and shaped the inquiry about the perceptions of ALI in the UAE (Cohen et al., 2007a). Similarly, the inquiry was influenced by the values that inhere in the social context of the ALI. The meanings derived from the interviews were continuously emerging during the course of the data collection and the simultaneous data analyses, adopting the interpretive process through the eyes of the participants and their unique perceptions (Cohen et al., 2007a).

3.3.2 Research Design

The study had an interview-based design, exploring individual's perceptions and interpretations of ALI and their implications. In this study, I was not assuming that there is a distinctly defined set of implications of ALI. The research stressed the subjective experiences of the individuals invited to participate in the interviews. I was more interested in the individuals' experiences and constructions of the realities of ALI (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007b). There is not a unified approach to designing an interview based qualitative study (Kings et al., 2019). The key assumption for deciding to have an interview-based approach is in line with the conceptual tenets of this inquiry, and that is of critical discourse analysis. The notion that language is power, and that knowledge is discursively created and is socially integrated (Kings et al., 2019) can best be utilized through a semi-structure interview-based approach.

The participants were invited to share their perspectives and views on ALI using a set of open-ended questions. The purpose was to allow their thoughts to emerge with a semi-structured frame of questioning. Often, the participants had the opportunities to elaborate on their views and explain their perceptions, in order to frame their view of the 'truth'.

While the study critically analysed the impact of ALI, it intended to find out about participants' views and perceptions about how ALI addressed the issues

around L1 Arabic language, the reason for which ALI came into being, which was perceived as encouraging L1 users to use the Arabic language. I had a keen interest in engaging with the research participants with expertise in the Arabic language curriculum, pedagogy and policy-making specifically in relation to their own insights about the *problematization* of Arabic L1 and what has spurred the introduction of ALI. This interest in ALI texts as tools for impact and perpetuation of new *knowledges* was key in the interpretation of possible *problematizations* of Arabic language policy (Foucault as cited in Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016). Also, through the interviews, a conversational relation and interaction took place between the participants and myself that developed continuous emergence of new understandings about the impact of ALI (Brinkmann and Kvale, 2015).

3.3.3 Methods of Data Collection

The data gathered for the study were from 29 original semi-structured interviews with a purposefully selected number of key interviewees (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007; Brinkmann and Kvale, 2015). The interviews conducted were planned as *semi-structured* or *non-directive* to provide a frame for the questioning and gathering of knowledge and views about ALI (Cohen et al., 2007a). The nature of the questions designed gave opportunities for participants to open up with additional information, ideas, perceptions and perspectives that can answer my research questions. Semi-structured interviewing produced knowledge socially which contributed to the growth of knowledge about ALI during every interview (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). The interviewees and myself both contributed to this knowledge as the conversations progressed where I sought to capture the interviewee's lived experience with the initiatives in question (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015).

A core set of interview questions was prepared based on the policy analysis framework conceptualized by Bacchi and Goodwin referred to as the WPR analytic tool (2016). *WPR* refers to "*What's the problem represented to be*" (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016b), which is consistent with the study's ontological stance of considering policy text as *discourse* and language of text as power (Wodak & Meyer, 2009). The WPR method allowed for a representation of the problem that ALI intended to address (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016). The WPR questions provided a frame for the

interpretation of the targets of ALI and the understanding of their discursive effects (Wodak & Meyer, 2009).

The question types varied, triggering a range of detail expected in the responses (Cohen *et al.*, 2007). The nature of the questions allowed interviewees to elaborate on certain ideas, while at the same time giving them a frame of reference to organize their responses through the core questions. A few additional questions, besides the core planned ones, emerged in individual interviews, giving each interviewee a margin for personalization of responses, around the core highlighted themes reflected through the core questions.

The position of the interviewer was significant in driving a productive and focused conversation, and this was the approach adopted in this research inquiry. Brinkmann and Kvale (2015) referred to this as '*deliberate naivete*' whereby the interviewer assumes the position of the spontaneous curious inquirer who may react with interest and sensitivity to some unexpected parts of the responses to illicit more detailed responses on specific points during the course of the interview. In the same vein, the conducted interviews were *discursive* whereby I was aware of the discourse used by the participant during an interview and their perspectives on this discourse around the topic of discussion (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015).

3.3.4 Procedures

All the interviews were conducted during the course of two months. The participants were contacted via a network of personal and professional connections. With some participants, the contact was made through a personal common connection via a phone communication. It was agreed that a standard form that included the key information was to be used when making these contacts, which included the general topic of the inquiry, at a basic level of information, without delving into further detail of the research to avoid them telling me what they thought I wanted to know. The value and contribution of the research inquiry was shared to emphasize the significance of participating in the interviews.

A standard letter of invitation was sent to all those participants who were given introductions about the inquiry, and who expressed interest in participating following the initial communication. The letter was a standard template provided by the University of Bath resources (Appendix C) and was adapted to include a brief

description of the topic of this inquiry. It also included a list of the ALI (Appendix D) to narrow their attention on specific initiatives, and to standardize their expectations of the interview discussions. Additionally, a sample of four of the interview questions were appended to the participant invitation form to provide an overview. Intentionally, I did not want to send all the questions to avoid prepared responses. This approach facilitated approval of participation and assured some confidence to some of the participants who were in high level positions. The interview arrangements were conducted over email and in some cases over the phone. All interview-related communications were sent out in English or in Arabic and sometimes in both languages, to accommodate the needs of individual participants (see Appendix C).

The interview questions were initially piloted twice with two of the 29 participants, after which I made some modifications to the phrasing of a number of questions. A number of core and sub questions were deleted or re-phrased after the first pilot was conducted. I provided Arabic translations of the interview questions, which were handy when participants preferred to be interviewed in Arabic. The order of the questions was in some instances re-arranged to ensure a smoother and more logical transition of the conversation. The second pilot was conducted to confirm all changes made in the first pilot, resulting in no further changes (Appendix A).

I drafted individual anonymous profiles for each participant and sent it to them a day before the interview was due for sign off. I asked some participants to draft their own version of the when I had limited accurate information about their experiences. The intention was to get these representations to be signed off before completing each interview. Pseudo names were assigned to each participant to protect their identity (Appendix E). The informed consent forms were kept in English only, as they belong to the university (Appendix B).

Most interviews were conducted face to face, with a few exceptions where a remote interview was conducted. The reasons for all the cases were the geographic location of the interviewee (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). This practice has advantages as well as limitations. It gave me a wider access to more suited participants who were not residents of the UAE (ibid). Additionally, it allowed both parties to focus on the core business of the interview, and thus minimize distractions. The key limitation of an interview that is remotely conducted is that the researcher may miss out on the non-linguistic communicative features, that are often seen in a face-to-face interview (ibid). I addressed this issue by allowing some introductions that could build rapport

before beginning the recording of the formal interviewing process. I further explained to them in detail what to expect over email so that they are well prepared.

I used the English language during the interviews with the few non-Arab speaking participants, and with some of the Arab speakers who preferred so. The rest of the Arab speaking participants preferred to use Arabic, or in some cases were code-switching between Arabic and English. Each interview started off with a brief and informal off-the-record chat to build rapport. My connection with a few of the interviewees eased out this process. The interviewees were given the opportunity to ask further questions about the project before starting the recording. Most of them raised a few questions about the level of their awareness of some of the initiatives in comparison to a deeper knowledge about others. 27 of the interviews were audio recorded, while 2 of the participants preferred that I only take notes. The recording started after reading out the anonymous bio of the participant as a way to tag the recordings. Participants' names were kept confidential on the records and on paper, and thus were not mentioned during the recording. All interview durations ranged between 40 and 60 minutes. Interviews were concluded by thanking the participants, with a closing note about the willingness to receive transcripts for validation at a later stage. Most of them agreed to participate in the validation by reading specific sections of the transcriptions, and few of them removed specific comments that, after giving it a second thought, they wished not to include in the data set.

3.5 Sampling Strategy

Participants in this inquiry were selected purposefully (Cohen et al., 2007; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Marshall, 1996; Patton 2002; Traverse, 2006) on three grounds. Initially, participants were selected on the basis of being practitioners and hence beneficiaries of some of the initiatives described in the previous chapter (Appendix D). These included heads of departments of the Arabic language in established schools, or principals of some other schools. The second criterion for the selection of some participants was their proven track record of expertise in the areas of Arabic language, language policy or both. Some of them are academics in higher education positions. The third category of participants involved individuals in senior decision-making positions in governmental or non-governmental entities, some of whom have actually had a role in one or several of the ALI. The below table shows

the full list of the participants who contributed to the study. Their detailed profiles are attached in Appendix D.

Name	Position/ experience	Capacity	Gender
1. Dr. Raya	Senior Academic public University	Language expert/academic	F
2. Mr. Ziad	Advisor/ curriculum expert/ T&L Arabic expert	Policy maker	M
3. Mr. Fahd	Senior position – regulatory authority- decision maker	Policy maker	M
4. Ms. Bana	Senior director for the Arabic language	practitioner	F
5. Ms. Dana	Senior decision maker/school principal	Practitioner	F
6. Ms. Martha	Arabic language evaluation expert- practitioner	Language expert/academic	F
7. Dr. Sandra	Academic/ Arabic language expert/ advisor to one initiative	Language expert/academic	F
8. Dr. Sandy	Senior policy researcher expert/academic/ decision maker	Language expert/academic	F
9. Mr. Marwan	T&L Arabic language practitioner/ decision maker	Practitioner	M
10. Ms. Ilham	T&L Arabic language expert/ practitioner/consultant/ curriculum designer/ co-author of children's literature	Language expert	F
11. Dr. Suad	Public university/ language expert	Language expert/ academic	F
12. Dr. Ahmad	Private sector/ T&L Arabic language expert/ practitioner/ decision maker	Practitioner	M
13. Dr. Nasma	Senior Academic/ decision maker at a university	Language expert/academic	F
14. Dr. Samer	Academic expert/ Arabic language- University professor	Language expert/ academic	M
15. Ms. Inas	T&L Arabic language expert/ practitioner	Practitioner	F
16. Dr. Peter	Director of Pan Arab prominent organization/ Arabic language academic and senior regional decision maker	Language expert/academic	M
17. Ms. Gaby	Advisor/ policy expert/ decision maker	Policy maker	F
18. Mr. Adam	T&L Arabic language expert/ practitioner/ decision maker	Practitioner	M
19. Dr. Reema	Senior official/ government authority/ decision maker	Policy maker	F
20. Dr. Salma	Former CEO of a well known school Group- Academic/ published on Arabic language & internationalism/ IB expert /international education consultant	Language expert/ academic/ practitioner	
21. Mr. Mohammad	T&L expert/ private consultant	Practitioner	M

22. Mr. Tarek	Advisor/ senior T&L expert/ government authority	Policy maker	M
23. Dr. Feryal	Advisor to senior officials – public sector, senior policy advisor	Policy maker	F
24. Ms. Ola	Practitioner Abu Dhabi and Abu Dhabi University	Practitioner	F
25. Ms. Amna	HOD Arabic, Abu Dhabi	Practitioner	F
26. Ms. Mariam	Ministry of Culture- Reading advocate- community activist	Practitioner	F
27. Mr. Majed	Regulator, linguist, publishing	Policy maker	M
28. Dr. Rabab	Children's literature Publisher	Practitioner	F
29. Ms. Lina	Children literature publisher and content developer	Practitioner	F

Table -1- *Participant Profiles*

This purposefulness and intentionality in the selection promoted a better understanding of the perceptions and problematizations of ALI (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2007) because these participants are informed about the initiatives. A number of the participants were selected because of their professional status and track record in their expertise in the areas of Arabic language and policy. They were identified as having participated in the planning or having consulted on phases of some of the ALI projects. Purposeful sampling allows for a full scope of issues to be unpacked and explored (Cohen et al., 2007).

The study began with a core number of interviewees in mind. After beginning with the interviews because of my growing knowledge of the topic. Also, the choice of additional interviewees widened based on recommendations provided by each participant about other possible individuals who can contribute effectively to the interview, similar to a snowball effect (Noy, 2008). I raised this question intentionally at the end of each interview to allow the participants to make a more careful identification of potential participants, having seen the quality of questions. For all of the interviewees, the anonymity of identity was a condition for willingness to participate in the research.

3.6 Data Analysis

The data analysis process was conducted in two phases. The first phase was the thematic analysis of the interview data, and the second was the critical discourse analysis of ALI texts.

3.6.1 *Thematic Data Analysis*

The data analysis process started with initial reduction of the transcribed 29 semi-structured interviews to identify key themes (Cohen et al., 2007a). Most themes were identified based on their relevance and direct links to the research questions and Bacchi's framework (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016b). They were organized according to the WPR questions broad themes. I manually designated thematic codes to different parts of the interview responses after repetitive readings of the transcribed texts of the interviews (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). After the coding, I carried out an analysis of the themes of each interview. I used analytic induction, whereby I sought patterns of similar views and formed the key themes with the most recurring and repetitive views and perceptions.

For concluding the coding and thematic analysis process, I formed some conclusions that were meant to respond to the research questions *RQ1*, 2 & 4. The key interview questions were phrased in a way that interrogated how the ALI of the UAE were perceived by the participants and what they thought were the problems with and implications of these ALI. The structure of the questions facilitated the process of identifying and inferring the problematizations of the Arabic language and the ALI from the perspectives of participants.

3.6.2 *Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) Approaches*

For the second level of data analysis, I used critical discourse analysis (CDA) to analyse the texts of ALI (Appendix D) and the interview texts, through two approaches: (1) the WPR *What's the problem represented to be* approach and (2) the *discourse-historical* approach by Ruth Wodak (Wodak & Meyer, 2009). What follows explains how these approaches supported my analysis and interpretation of findings.

First, I analysed both interview texts through the lens of the *What's the problem represented to be* (WPR) approach. In this step, I took the initial thematic analysis of the interview texts and applied discursive techniques specifically to identify perceptions and *problematizations* of the ALI. Second, I proceeded with the *discourse-historical analysis* (DHA) of Wodak (2011), whereby I analyzed the ALI texts discursively following DHA devices. I then cross referenced this analysis with the views and perceptions of the participants from the interviews from the WPR approach. All discursive devices used in both phases are explained in the next subsection.

3.6.2.1 The WPR as a CDA Tool

As discussed earlier, the initial analysis was guided broadly by the WPR conceptual questioning scheme. This section gives an overview of the WPR conceptual questions and how they were used in this study, both as interview questions, and later as a CDA analysis tool that supported the DHA analytical tools (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016b).

The first question, *What the 'problem' represented to be in the policy?* set the scene for the discussion of the issue addressed through the ALI, which was the current status of the Arabic language as L1 in the UAE. The purpose was to present an explanation of this particular context. The approach taken in these questions worked backwards starting from the text to the original issue under discussion, with the assumption that policies are linked to the problems themselves, rather than being isolated from the contextual reality. In the interviews my adaptation of this question was as follow: "What is your view of the most recent current Arabic language initiatives in the UAE"? followed by a couple of clarifying sub-questions.

The second question, *What prepositions and assumptions underlie this representation of the 'problem'?* probed deeper into possible causes and assumptions that lead to the launch of ALI as tools for addressing the problematization of the Arabic language. My adapted question was phrased as: Looking at ALI and the way they were presented, what do they tell you about the status of the teaching and/or learning of the MSA for L1 learners? What this question did not do is to highlight the ill-fit between the proposed solution to the perceived issue. However, it was about inquiring into the implicit *problematization* of the Arabic

language starting from the stated solutions in the text (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016b). The purpose was to seek meaning within the text itself, rather than in the minds of the policy makers (*ibid*).

The third question, *How has this representation of the problem come about?* was a way to explore the development of the problem as we currently see it. I applied it through a question that explored the wider context landscape of the problem, extending to other Arab speaking countries. The question inquired into similar initiatives in other Arab speaking countries, partially in an attempt to draw the picture of the issue of the Arabic language over time. The purpose was to highlight other alternatives to the ALI in the UAE to emphasize that ALI are not the only ways to address the issue of Arabic as L1 and that there are other possibilities that policy-makers can look at (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016b).

The fourth question, *What is left unproblematic in this representation? Where are the silences? Can the 'problem' be conceptualized differently?* opened up the scope to think differently about the *problematization* of the Arabic language as L1. My adaptation of the question was an opportunity to look at other ways to improve the use of MSA, or even to highlight issues that are still not brought to the table at the policy level. This inquiry was phrased in a set of four simple questions that allowed the interviewee to consider different ideas and probe their thinking around other ways for seeing the situation of Arabic as L1.

The fifth question, *What effects (discursive, subjectification, lived) are produced by this representation of the 'problem'?* was an inquiry into the impact of ALI texts. The adaptation of the question looked explicitly at the impact and implications of the ALI on teachers, learners, curriculum, and pedagogy of Arabic as L1. The impact as seen in this question was meant to be a political implication rather than a measured outcome supported by quantitative evidence (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016b). This impact was seen in terms of its 'discursive, subjectification and lived' effects (*ibid*, 2016).

The sixth and last question, *How and where has this representation of the 'problem' been produced, disseminated and defended? How has it been and/or how can it be disrupted and replaced?* can be initiated and supported by the discussions in questions 2 and 3. The purpose was to suggest alternative ways of seeing the Arabic language policy landscape both in the UAE and beyond. It was about challenging the existing representations of the issue of Arabic L1 and disrupting the

taken for granted 'truths' that have been used in the past (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016b).

After conducting the thematic data analysis, I applied discursive devices specific to the WPR approach (Goodwin, 2009) to cross-reference both the interview texts and the ALI texts. These devices were identification and analysis of ideas, narratives, and discursive similarities between the two types of texts (ibid).

3.6.2.2 *The Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA)*

As discussed in the previous chapter, adopting the DHA approach in the analysis was the necessary to analyse specific issues related to the Arabic language discourse. Wodak's strategies in her approach provided interpretation of issues around Arab national identity. She explains that "discourses about nations and national identities rely on at least four types of discursive macro-strategies (Wodak & Meyer, 2009). They are constructive strategies, preservative, transformative strategies, and destructive strategies (Wodak & Meyer, 2009, p.18). In this study, the prominent discussion was mainly about preservative strategies, whereby the analysis clearly featured a discussion of the *discourse* that promotes the status of Arabic as a symbol of Arab identity, as well as the implications of this *discourse*.

While conducting CDA and using the WPR questions to support the reflective reading of the data, the data findings were taken to another level of categorization and selection. This selection process revolved around emerging themes linked to concepts such as *language and power* that manifested themselves in the text, particularly in connection to the *preservative strategy* of analysis (Wodak & Meyer, 2009). Breaking down the text of the data into units helped systematize the analysis process across all interviews.

The choice of discourse-historical approach to CDA poses some limitations. The idea of selecting individual discourses and identifying *discursivity*, *genres*, *fields of action* and *intertextuality* features are all subjective exercises (Wodak & Meyer, 2009). Although the social practices and the discourses are very much identified by participants and supported in the interviews and in the ALI texts, individual participants were seen to comment on particular discourses more than others. This, in a way, gave me a chain of analysis that is worthy to comment on. As a result,

some sub-topics or discourses won a larger focus in the analysis. This could only be controlled through continuous *reflexivity*.

For the purpose of the DHA, I used guiding questions that framed the discourse analysis strategies I selected. First, I presented the knowledge available in the sample texts about historical sources and background of the context in which the discursive events are embedded (Wodak, 2011). Then I defined the genres, topics and discourses that can be traced and are significant in the selected ALI documents (Appendix F).

At this level of the analysis, the strategies I used were perspectivation, argumentation, and where applicable, intensification/mitigation (Wodak, 2011). The key questions that I set to frame this analysis were the following:

- 1- From what perspective or point of view do the different groups (policy makers, authorities, and academics who created the ALI texts) including myself as part of this discourse, make representations of the Arabic language and justify arguments about its future? (negatively, positively, deprecatorily, or appreciatively?
- 2- Are their utterances articulated overtly? Are they intensified or are they mitigated?
- 3- Which discourses can be developed or brought forward in the future?
- 4- How are the interdiscursive/intertextual relations having effects on the practices of educators and stakeholders?

3.7 Data Management

3.7.1 Interview Transcripts

The transcripts were arranged and stored virtually in a secure folder, where a coding protocol was used (Guest, Namey, & Mitchell, 2013). The codes were a distinct set of identifying symbols and numbers that were consistently used for every participant's respective data element such as interview transcript, interviewer notes, signed consent form and demographic information about the participant. The codes were numbers and initials used in lieu of names to protect the individual identities of participants, in line with the codes of ethics observed in this research inquiry (Bera, 2011).

Interviews were transcribed as verbatim. In cases when the interviews were conducted in Arabic, the transcriptions were also conducted in Arabic in order to allow quotations in Arabic. When verbatim was quoted in the data analysis section, these were kept in Arabic in the report, and subtitled with my own English translation of that particular citation.

The data were arranged into subsets according to the profiles of the participants. Subsequently, data sets underwent coding and reduction steps to prepare them for analysis (Cohen et al., 2007a; Guest et al., 2013).

3.7.2 ALI Texts as Sources of Data

The thirteen ALI texts/sources were selected and included from digitally available materials, media and news reports published by the UAE government about ALI via national media agencies online (Appendix D). They were selected based on a simple electronic search and through my prior knowledge about them from my professional context. These ALI started during the past 10 years and were published at different timings. There was no particularly known significance to the specific times or years during which they were launched.

The ALI texts were coded and organized based on type of initiative, to be used as a source of data for critical discourse analysis at a later stage. Table 2 below shows the list of ALI that were addressed in this study (See also Appendix D for detailed description and Appendix F for analysis of texts). The list was also sent to participants to focus the attention of the interview discussions. Some participants knew few more initiatives due to their involvement in them as advisors or consultants. I continued to update the ALI list throughout the course of the study as needed.

Arabic Language Initiative	Text codes as used in data analysis
UAE Arabic language charter - issued by the Federal government of the UAE	ALI-1
Al Arabiya Lughah lil Hayat (Arabic for Life)	ALI-2
<i>Arabic Reading Challenge</i>	ALI-3
Mohammed Bin Rashed Arabic language Award	ALI-4
Law for the government communications in Arabic	ALI-5
Arabic Language Academy in Sharjah	ALI-6
Arabic digital content	ALI-7
UAE National Law of Reading	ALI-8

"Lughati" is an initiative launched by HH Dr. Shaikh Sultan Bin Mohammad Al Qasimi	ALI-9
The cyber initiative - hash tag "#Bilarabi" meaning "#inArabic	ALI-10
KHDA initiative entitled "Ish Al Arabiya" where teachers of Arabic across schools of Dubai are supported as a community of practice	ALI-11
KHDA initiatives to advance the profile of the Arabic language through the inspection operations of the Dubai School Inspection Bureau (DSIB).	ALI-12
The "Madrasa" e-learning platform by Mohammed Bin Rashed Global Initiatives	ALI-13

Table -2- List of Arabic Language Initiatives

3.8 Quality criteria: *trustworthiness* of research

The quality of the inquiry process, the findings, the narrative accounts and general claims resulting from data analyses were of critical concern. Of equal concern was the quality of the report and the extent to which what I reported in any section of this research reflected the perceptions of the interviewees the ALI and their problematizations. This section addresses how the *trustworthiness* was established for the entire research process and how the quality of the interviewing process and the reporting was secured.

Trustworthiness of this research inquiry was established practically through several levels of *credibility*, *transferability*, *dependability* and *reflexivity* (Shenton, 2004). Also, a key consideration that affected the quality of this inquiry was my *critical* paradigm (Creswell & Miller, 2005; Morrow, 2005) and what my position brought into the interview discussion and later into the analysis. Other aspects inherent to *trustworthiness* in this study were established as explained in the next sections including the provision for interview validity and quality assurance through peer debriefing and participant collaborations.

3.8.1 Credibility

On one level, effectiveness was reflected in the extent to which the entire research process including the questioning, the narrative accounts representing the interviewees' views, and the analyses of data were *credible* (Creswell & Miller, 2000), or reflective of a true picture of the reality of participants' views (Shenton,

2004). The techniques used to ensure credibility were *triangulation*, *peer debriefing* and *reflexivity* (Guba & Lincoln, 1985).

To improve the possibility that claims made during the interviews were credible, I had to seek logical connections that were emerging from the findings relevant to the same questions across interviewees, during the ongoing analysis stage. Guba and Lincoln (1985) refer to this mode of triangulation as *multiple sources* of evidence. Along the same lines, Morrow (2005) suggests that data had to be well processed and linked logically throughout the data analysis stage to maintain integrity of the findings. Cohen and Manion define the process as an 'attempt to map out, or explain more fully, the richness and complexity of human behaviour by studying it from more than one standpoint' (Cohen & Manion, 1986, p. 254).

Peer debriefing was established through seeking support of people external to the study in the capacity as readers and reviewers (Guba and Lincoln, 1985). This process was selected as a technique to ensure accurate contextualization of the reported text and analysis of the data in the context of the UAE. The purpose was to ensure that the levels of questioning and the resulting descriptions are accurate and reflective enough of the realities of the context and of ALI in particular.

The *peers* selected for debriefing were contacts who showed interest and good will in supporting this research, from their capacity as colleague researchers, educators, experts in the subject knowledge of ALI in particular. They acted as sounding boards for the ideas presented in the analysis of the data (Creswell & Miller, 2000). The peers were approached from the early stage when the design of the interview questions was planned. They also contributed as participants in the piloting of the interview questions. Their support and contribution included looking at re-phrases of certain questions and making some amendments related to the sequence of questioning. At later stages, they were asked to critique emerging themes and play the devil's advocate while synthesizing the data sets, a process otherwise known as *participant collaborations* (Morrow, 2005).

3.8.2 Dependability

Dependability is related to the consistency of research findings and the extent to which these interview accounts can be reproduced at other times by different

researchers (Shenton, 2004). Initially, the choice of the conceptual policy analysis framework, with the WPR questioning method (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016a) provides an adequate and well balanced quality of questioning. This framework cannot be executed without adapting the same set of conceptual questions in every instance where a study about policy impact analysis is conducted. This aspect of the conceptual framework, on the one hand, contributed to the consistency of interviewing. On the other hand, this being said, as individual researchers may be different, and the contexts of research may be continuously changing, the concept of *dependability* as a measure of quality is contentious. That is why it was crucial in this research to consider *transferability* rather than *dependability*, as another measure of quality.

3.8.3 Transferability

The study had contextual particularities reflected in the choice of the participants invited to the interviews as expressed in the previous section. However, I ensured that there was sufficient detail described about the context of these interviews and the way they were conducted, so that if it were to be repeated elsewhere, it could be executed under the same conditions (Shenton, 2004). The outcomes would not be the same considering the qualitative nature of this study and how its outcomes were linked to contextual factors.

3.8.4 Reflexivity

The *criticality* from a researcher's perspective meant that I needed to be *reflexive* and continuously revealed all the thinking, assumptions, and reflections that my position as a researcher may have brought into the analysed text (ibid). In other words, I had to acknowledge what my influence can bring to the research setting (Cohen et al., 2007), especially during the interviews. The practice of *reflexivity* throughout this study affected how *confirmable* the process was (Shenton, 2004). Reflexivity allowed for minimising bias and adhering to objective analysis that is grounded in the data sets themselves.

In this research, I had to 'self-disclose' (Creswell & Miller, 2000) and be clear and transparent about the thoughts and perspectives brought into the discussion,

which might have in some cases posed limitations to the narrative text. I practiced reflexivity throughout the process of data collection and analysis in this study, looked at my position and how I was situated in the study as a researcher living in the Arabic language *discourse* in the UAE (ibid). In a way, participants acknowledged my role, and thus their responses were influenced and tweaked by this reality.

Henceforth, during the data analysis, I had to be actively looking at my arguments as they were developing when I engaged with the data, attempting to ensure that they were “sound, well-grounded, justifiable, strong and convincing,” (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015).

In the context of the quality of interview knowledge, Brinkmann and Kvale (2015) referenced the term *objective reflexivity*, applying the same practice of reflexivity during the interview whereby the researcher needs to be keen to express sensitivity about personal prejudices and attempt to clarify them explicitly in the report whenever appropriate.

3.8.5 Interview Validity

The most important way to ensure higher levels of validity in interviews was to “minimize the amount of bias as much as possible,” (Cohen et al., 2007a). Initially, this measure of quality was orchestrated by the interviewee’s role. The quality of interview accounts was linked to the subjectivity of interviewees and depended on their positions and individual experiences (Creswell & Miller, 2000) in validating their accounts.

Along the same vein, the question of interviewer reliability came into play, in relation to the processes of interviewing, transcribing, and analysing (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). The interviews, as mentioned earlier, focused on a specifically defined set of core questions, defined as the WPR questions methodology. As conceptually designed, the core questions allowed for opportunities for probing further or asking sub-questions, contingent on the interviewee and his/her role. Any contextually emerging questions were treated as outliers and were subjected to validation on site (ibid). At the level of analysis, these emergent questions were highlighted in the data analysis section. Interview responses were categorized separately and were analysed and linked to the main induced themes ensuring that these analyses were

logically sound and performed with a critical stance, avoiding biased interpretations (*ibid*).

Interviews were controlled to avoid several possible causes of bias. Firstly, in a semi-structured interview context, it was important to use the exact wording and the order of the questions in all interviews (Cohen et al., 2007a). It was a challenge to calibrate the emerging contextual questions in a way that does not affect the original scripting of the questions. The probing questions and the emerging sub-questions were kept to a bare minimum to avoid bias and inconsistency. The key to this was clarity in building rapport with the interviewees before beginning the formal interviews in order to manage the conversation in a smooth and effective manner (*ibid*, 2007).

Additionally, it was important to pilot the interviews a couple of times to be prepared for issues arising during the interviews. This preparation was perceived as training on interview skills in managing and resolving issues arising in the more challenging interviews, especially during those conducted with senior and more prominent individuals. Preparation for an interplay of power within the interviews was necessary (Cohen et al., 2007a). An interviewee who holds a prominent position may have thought that this interviewer may not be on a similar grounding in terms of knowledge and expertise. The interplay of power was crucial in these kinds of interview situations, that pose a challenge, because they could have been politically and socially complex moments (Cohen et al., 2007; Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). This needed preparation and expectation setting on my part during the pilot interviews in anticipation of possible emerging issues (Cohen et al., 2007).

3.9 Limitations of the Study

Limitations of this study presented themselves at different levels, starting with the logistics of conducting the interviews, the writing of the report, and the choice of methods for data collection and analysis.

To begin with, the context of this study posed a limitation from the perspective of its cultural and political particularities. The ALI are initiatives that were fairly young considering when they were launched (less than 10 years). Given the context of the UAE as a fast-growing country that is increasingly attracting attention regionally and

world-wide, any initiative by the government of the UAE will hence fall under the spot-light and the critique of their implications will be received with sensitivity.

Therefore, I had to conduct the research with conscious efforts to be socially and politically correct when requesting all the interviews especially when dealing with individuals in critical positions. This was particularly true of those who currently hold policy decision making positions, who refused my invitation, or those others who showed some hesitation to participate in this research initially, until after they were assured that the identities of participants will be protected. At the level of conducting the interviews, I had to weave my emerging questions with utmost care and with a neutral stance, so that any wording that reflects a value judgment won't be received with sensitivity. On the level of writing the report, similarly, lexical choices had to be culturally and politically sensitive.

The interviews as semi structured were susceptible to subjectivity and bias on the part of the interviewee (Cohen et al., 2007a). This method allowed individual participants to respond variably to the same question sets, and at times re-direct the conversation in another unexpected direction. I had to address this by standardizing the quality of the responses in these cases (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015).

The other interview related limitation was the use of a defined set of questions that had to be supported no matter how much adaptation was made to the questions. The sub questions (Appendix A) that were planned came in handy to overcome this limitation in situations when the participants had the urge to elaborate further on specific ideas.

Like in most qualitative studies, discourse analysts will be questioned on the validity of their interpretations (Rogers, 2001). The selection of text units for critical discourse analysis would be criticized on the grounds of subjectivity that it may present. As explained in the data analysis section, Van Dijk suggests making selection decisions based on specific models of text that is deemed most significantly relevant to the study, as a way to overcome the exhaustive analysis of discourse. When an analyst exhausts all the possibilities of interpretation, this practice will ensure validity. At the same time, this process was a subjective practice, bringing into question my personal inclination towards one interpretation or the other (Rogers, 2001). In this study, I made a conscious decision to frame the analyses within specifically chosen models of text, in order to overcome the limitation of

subjectivity. So, I purposefully selected the introductions or statements of objectives in each ALI text to conduct the DHA and WPR analyses.

3.10 Ethical Considerations

The ethical guidelines for educational research published by the British Educational Research Association (Bera, 2011) were the guiding principles in approaching and conducting the semi-structured interviews with the 29 participants in this research inquiry. The BERA identifies 'informed consent' as a condition for individuals to participate in research. Each participant was requested to sign the informed consent form (Appendix B). Prior to the interviews, participants were informed about how they would be represented in this research and how their contribution would be used in the report. They were also informed about on their right to withdraw from the research at any time, or to refuse to answer any given question (Bera, 2011).

Another key consideration was securing participants' anonymity throughout the research process. I ensured not to mention any names of participants while recording the interviews. Further, each participant was assigned a symbolic identification code during the interview transcription phase and thereafter in the written report. Quoting the participants' words in the report were referenced using the codes attached to them.

Secondly, I agreed with the participants to provide a briefing of their individual professional profiles to be included in the records to support their expertise and authority as relevant informants in this study. The profile descriptions were reviewed and approved by each individual participant before inclusion in the final report.

3.11 Summary of Chapter 3

The chapter explained the overall plan for the inquiry strategy, design, methods and procedures. It provided details of how the interview design was suitable for this particular research inquiry topic. It proceeded with explanations of the only data collection tools used, which were semi-structured interviews, based on and guided by the WPR method questioning protocol (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016b). The sampling approach and interview procedures were detailed in separate sections. The

discussion of the data analysis approach rationalized the CDA approaches used, the WPR as CDA, and the discourse-historical approach (Wodak & Meyer, 2009) that contextualized the political discourse studied. This section elaborated how both the WPR and DHA approaches helped frame the Arabic language as L1 discourse in relation to its political and historical context.

This chapter additionally featured a dedicated section for discussing the measures of trustworthiness observed in this study. Credibility, dependability, and transferability were all measures of quality that had to be planned to ensure the rigour of the inquiry. Reflexivity throughout the research was applied to minimize the subjectivity of the claims brought forward and adhere to an objective analysis as much as possible. The chapter concluded with sections on the limitations and challenges faced, as well as on ethical considerations that were taken into account.

The next chapter is a thematic presentation of the key findings. It summarizes all the identified and emerging key themes from the 29 interviews that were conducted. The themes were broadly organized according to the WPR questioning tool, with some more integrated themes wherever this was deemed more appropriate based on the findings.

CHAPTER 4

THEMATIC DATA ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction to Chapter 4

The objective of this chapter is to analyse the interview data using the “*What’s the Problem Represented to be*” (WPR) framework of questions (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016b). The approach taken in this analysis integrates the data findings from different questions under broad key themes. The summaries include all of the participants’ views within every identified theme, except when there were recurrences, overlaps and elaborations. Appendix G lists interview codes that I use in all the citations in this chapter. In each citation from an interview transcript, I will mention interviewee number, followed by page number, and then line number, for example (3 = interview number 3; 6 = p. 6; 15 = line 15).

The chapter begins with the participants’ perspectives about issues of the Arabic language in the UAE and broadly in other Arab countries. I then present the findings about how the *Arabic language initiatives* (ALI) were perceived and viewed by the public with their overarching political support. As a result, the chapter summarizes how the ALI problematized the Arabic language situation. Further on, the summaries of the implications of ALI are presented. The chapter finally summarizes the participants’ views of alternative approaches to ALI, and how the language policy landscape can be developed in the UAE and the GCC region in general.

I wish to stress in this chapter that my purpose was not to focus in detail on the problems of teaching and learning of Arabic. The focus was on presenting the key findings in response to my research questions that investigate the participants’ perceptions of ALI and their problems. Additionally, I intended to highlight themes that supported the implications of ALI on the pedagogy and curriculum of the Arabic language.

4.2 Views of ALI and their Underlying Assumptions

Most participants spoke about the significance of ALI as high-level politically supported initiatives and viewed them as a response from the UAE government to the need to raise the profile of the Arabic language. N14 captured the view that was heard from most participants: "...I think some of the initiatives that have happened are bringing more focus to the importance of Arabic" (14-1-22). N6 and N7 thought that ALI are significant, because the country needs a political decision to consolidate the presence of the Arabic language (6-1-27) and (7-1-28). According to N2, N12, and N18, the UAE government invested in decisions and actions to strengthen the status of the Arabic language as a subject taught in schools. The UAE put Arabic language at the forefront by mandating it as a key subject to all students, whether Arab or non-Arab, in all private schools in the UAE, which was seen to have made a difference over the years. This decision was supported and enacted through the annual inspection visits conducted by government regulators in all the Emirates, particularly in Dubai, Sharjah and Abu Dhabi. For example, N2 explained his view of the impact of the Knowledge and Human Development Authority:

"You can say now that we have an authority that takes care of teaching Arabic especially which is something we with all the stress coming from KHDA and the inspection, but we still can see that this is a great drive, and great motivation. Before the KHDA it was very loose..." (N2-1-29).

N13 additionally suggested that the UAE federal government's decision to enforce the use of the Arabic language in all public and formal communications was a significant step, and it was clearly modelling the belief that Arabic is linked to the Arab and UAE identity as a nation state (13-2-51). Some participants pointed at how ALI have become numerous especially, with echoes beyond the UAE, alerting to a perceived deficiency in the language competence and use. N21 noted: "The number of initiatives brought forth in the past 5 years, it has been remarkable" (21-1-33). Most participants stressed that ALI are an indication that the Arabic language is at risk. For example, N15 clarified:

"...I think it is based on the assumption again that there is a gap. There is a need, there is a hole we need to fill in terms of Arabic teacher professional preparation or students' acquisition and progress in Arabic, so we need those kinds of things to raise the bar" (15-2-67).

Similarly, N17 highlighted that ALI do reflect that there is an awareness that standard Arabic is weakened. N23, on the other hand, assumed that the leaders became alerted by the prevalence of English and raised the flag around the need to support Arabic when she said: “أنا أعتقد أن القادة والمسؤولين أدركوا أهمية الاستعجال في تدارك الوضع “ وإلا أصبح الكل يتحدث فقط بالإنكليزية على حساب العربية.” “I believe that the leaders and decision-makers realized that they needed to act fast to address the issues, or else everybody would end up speaking only English at the expense of Arabic” [my translation] (23-4-8).

The Arab cultural identity was a theme frequently raised by most participants at different phases during the interview. Some participants linked the significance of ALI to the Arab identity and to the Emirati culture. N24 referred to of ALI as ways to preserve the Emirati identity through the Arab identity. He explained how the Emirati's would be concerned about losing their identity because it is an integral part of the Arab identity, and if the latter was lost, the former is equally at risk (24-1-7). N28 stressed, “The major thing behind these initiatives is that all these leaders are aware that how tightly linked is the language to the culture of the country,” (28-1-28). N15 explained how each ALI individually is valuable because they are meant “to enhance the Arabic language experience for students and to make them attached to their mother tongue” (15-2-2).

Participants stressed the role of ALI in influencing the teaching and learning experience of Arabic. For instance, N29 stressed that these initiatives have been significant boosters and sources of motivation to millions of Arabs in the UAE and beyond (29-1-36). A proportion of participants acknowledged the value of ALI for teachers. For example, N5 explained,

“Whenever they want to encourage students to read, see Sh. Mohammad as a role model. So they are linking, this is very important to see our leader and what is he doing for the country. Even the way they are teaching now, Even Ish al Arabiya, now they are...yaani I can't generalize, however, you can see some teachers they do more hands on activities and improve the taching strategies and methodologies in order to make sure that they are up to date... (5-5-21).

Contrary to these views, N21 questioned the link between ALI and the situation of the teaching and learning of Arabic. She considered that they were mere “add-ons” to the K-12 system when she explained,

“...because they are initiatives, I have not seen that they have caused enough disruption hmmm, and they’re not integrated organically, you need the K-12 system to be with you, if the K-12 system is not with you when it comes to Arabic, they just become add-ons... but once the event is gone, there’s no long-lasting or transferrable effect that I can see.” (21-2-62).

Some participants commented on the assumptions of authorities that gave a steer through the ALI. For example, N27 and N8 suggested that the authorities are assuming that the teaching and learning of Arabic is not attractive. N12 and N14 suggested that there is an indication that something is wrong with reading, and hence the various initiatives targeting reading. N14 explained, “The assumptions were that people didn’t see reading as important as it should be and that [authorities] were trying to encourage reading across the board” (14-3-90).

A similar range of critical comments came from a number of participants, who after emphasizing the high value of ALI, were critical of how these initiatives were implemented. Some of them believed that ALI did not address the heart of the problem. N1 explained how *Arabic for Life* initiative was highly significant, but he was dismayed that this project did not make it to the relevant decision makers when he explained, “I found out that I’m coming to a place in which they value the teaching and learning of Arabic, and they want to change, they want to do something serious, because they feel there’s a risk, but unfortunately, there is no follow-up,” (1-2-4). N16 expressed how ALI scratch the surface, and do not touch the core of the issues around the teaching and learning of the Arabic language (16-1-20). N16 thought that the *Arabic Reading Challenge* for example motivated students to read but was critical of the extent to which reading became a daily habit for learners (16-2-1).

Similarly, N12 commented on the selective nature of these ALI. He explained that they are good for those who have access to the curriculum, in terms of competence in the language, but they are open for voluntary participation (12-1-26). N5 expressed that the Arabic language situation is not about initiatives, but about how the policy should be designed to shake the existing structure and to support the teaching and learning of the Arabic language (5-1-23). Interestingly, N9 explained that ALI represent what schooling failed to deliver for Arabic language learners. She noted: “Initiatives are the bi-product of what is not happening either at home or at school” (9-1-37).

Some participants wondered whether ALI were based on any research data and questioned the quality of their implementation. N8 (8-1-23) and N16 (16-1-20) explained that there needed to be verifiable objective data base for planning these initiatives to ensure that they fulfil their targets. N17 went further to suggest,

“Some of the initiatives are purely to check a KPI. And that’s the problem. There are some initiatives that are extremely big and good. I’m not familiar with them in detail, the specifics. But for example, the reading challenge, the translation, because one of our weak spots...the fact that we don’t have resources in Arabic as strong as the English. And the initiatives of MBR, to translate a million books into Arabic, I’m not sure where it stands now, but there are initiatives that are really strong. But they are also similar to every other place in the world. There are initiatives that are face value.” (17-1-27).

Similar views were expressed around how the ALI were falling short at the level of execution, highlighting some gaps in the system. N27 suggested, for example, that ALI are a vision, and for this to be realized, it needs a strategy to move it into action (27-1-29). Again, N3 stressed that the ALI are very promising, but they do not affect, or include all of the Emirates. She added, ALI are not very clear at the implementation level (3-1-22). These critical points set the scene for discussion in the upcoming chapters about the future of ALI.

4.3 The “Big movers, Boosters, and Political Drivers”: The Political Support of ALI

After expressing their views of ALI, participants were asked to elaborate on the role of the political leadership behind the ALI. As discussed in the literature review, the ALI are launched by the leaders of the UAE, and mostly by His Royal Highness (HRH) Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum (MBR). I asked the participants about the extent to which they thought the role of HRH MBR was significant, in an attempt to draw the boundaries of the political context of ALI and describe their political sponsorship from the perspectives of participants. These questions were still part of the introductory question of the interview which was focused on the representation of the key problems of the Arabic language, but they were also indicative of the assumptions of the public about the ALI.

4.3.1 Significance of the Role of Leaders

Most participants emphasized the significance of the role of the UAE leadership to raise the profile of the Arabic language out of concern about the situation of this language. Participants reported that the government is leading the revival of the Arabic language. N25 explained:

“I do believe that in the last 5 years in particular, I know there have been some initiatives before 2012... I believe that the government policies are geared towards proving that the UAE is leading the revival of Arabic to its previous glory” (25-1-16).

She further elaborated that HRH Dr. Sultan Al Qassimi, who is an academic, insisted on course requirements for all students to study aspects of the Arabic language and Arab civilization in order to be able to graduate from university (25-1-24). This view was echoed by other participants as they stressed the collective efforts of the rulers of the UAE to support and implement the ALI in their own ways. N26 explained how she worked closely with HRH Sheikh Sultan Al Qassimi on programs to develop curricula for emerging readers of Arabic. She said: “I know that his highness is genuinely concerned. I think all of the rulers are concerned about the status of Arabic...what he says is that teachers are not speaking proper Arabic” (26-2-5). The views of participants reflect that they are convinced of the genuine concern of the leaders of the UAE to improve the Arabic language.

The participants additionally spoke about the keen intentions of MBR as seen in sponsoring and launching the ALI as long-term and visionary initiatives. They believed that it clearly shows how leaders are determined to turn around the vision for the Arabic language being the symbol of the Arab identity. N7 explained how MBR could have never actually launched any of these initiatives, but his keen interest and sensitivity towards the issue of Arabic as a symbol of Arab and Emirati identity spurred the ALI (7-1-29). For example, N27 explained that these are high level initiatives and are: “very important critical milestones in the status of the Arabic language in the UAE [but] not necessarily related to an immediate result” (27-1-28). Finally, N18 stressed that MBR always strived for excellence in every other sector in the country, and it is this same consistent approach that directed his interest towards the Arabic language (18-2-33). N9 justified this as part of his personal passion about

poetry and writing that certainly gave him an edge in launching the ALI when she stressed, “[ALI] is international and local and regional, but this is a personal thing, because he personally is a writer, he is a poet, he wants to preserve his native language,” (9-2-19). These views of participants reflect that the leaders of the UAE are well-trusted, and the public take their decisions seriously. The public also understand that leaders are putting genuine efforts and are determined about what they want to implement.

4.3.2 Policy-Practice Gap

I asked the participants to identify the gap between the views of authorities about the Arabic language issues through ALI and how the public sees the situation. The responses to this question contributed to the *problematization* of the Arabic language and added value to the discussion on addressing the root causes of the Arabic language situation in the next chapters.

Most participants thought that the views of the public and those of the authorities were in line with each other regarding the issues around the Arabic language, and hence the assumptions reflected in them. Fewer participants considered that the authorities are in one place and the general public are in another. For example, N18 (18-3-3) and N23 (23-1-34) gave evidence of *Living Arabic* to show that the policy makers are cognizant of the decline of the teaching of Arabic and found a need to create this community of Arabic teacher practitioners to exchange experiences and engage in developmental and collaborative pedagogical conversations.

A lower proportion of participants thought that policy makers and beneficiaries, or the general public, differ in their assumptions and problematizations of the Arabic language. For instance, N8 explained that all the stakeholders want the same outcome, that the children develop better competence in using the Arabic language, regardless of how this can be achieved at a policy level. She said:

“... at the end of the day, the end result for the parents, the regulators and the authorities and the ministries and the parents and the public is the same... we want our kids to know the language, to excel at it, to be comfortable...in my observation, when we do focus groups with parents and we present to them this initiative, they don’t care.” (8-3-2)

Along the same lines, some participants commented on how parents and the general public often reacted to some initiatives. N22 expressed how parents react to changes in curricular developments, with different assumptions in mind than the intentions of the policy maker who wrote the curriculum (22-1-38). With a similar view, N3 assumed that only the Arabic teacher understands the criticality of the situation of the learner, unlike what the policy makers think, referring to gaps between policy level planning and implementation realities (3-3-8). Finally, offering a third and different perspective, N9 (9-3-11) and N21 (21-2-57) identified authorities' assumptions as being independent of the learners' outcomes and stressed that policymakers do understand the issues with the language, but the realities of outcomes of students remain irrelevant from this understanding. These responses reflected some useful insight into the policy-practice gap with regards to the Arabic language situation, paving the way for the wider discussion about problems with ALI.

4.4 Wider Context of the Arabic Language in Other Arab Countries

4.4.1 Policies to Support Teaching and Learning

A number of participants highlighted some key differences between the Arabic language K-12 provision in the UAE and in other Arab countries. For example, they pointed out that countries like Lebanon, Jordan, and Egypt have no government initiatives as the case of the UAE. They have policies in place that support the teaching and learning of Arabic. N15 (15-3-49) and N28 (28-8-28) spoke about subjects other than Arabic that are taught in Arabic in Lebanon and Syria, particularly at the high school level. N16 highlighted that Arabic instruction is mandatory in the early years, which has significant impact on students' entry level competences in Arabic in the primary (16-3-8). However, in the UAE, this level is not mandatory. N2 added to this that there are specific requirements that support better teaching and learning of Arabic when he suggested that in countries like Syria, Arabic is prioritized as seen in exit qualifications. He said:

“So in Syria,...you cannot fail for more than one subject. If you fail two subjects you have to repeat, but if you fail one subject you can pass to the next year. But if you fail Arabic you cannot

pass. So Arabic itself has the weight of all other subjects” (2-3-38).

Participants raised the issue of deficient curriculum development expertise in the region, which impacted the current outcomes of Arabic, such as in the UAE. N6 specifically pointed that we lack expert curriculum developers with a modern mindset, referring to the concern raised by other participants that the curriculum is not engaging enough (6-5-42). Along the same vein, N4 (4-2-69) and N18 (18-4-44) shared that the Queen Rania teachers’ association (QRTA) is a hub for building capacity of Arab teachers. QRTA focuses on skills for developing curricula, and this came as no surprise, having established that this aspect was an identified need and clearly put Arabic language competence in a critical situation.

From a similar perspective, N21 explained that the Arab countries have been finding the way in elevating the teaching and learning of Arabic, but the UAE is ahead in this aspect (21-3-47). In her view, other Arab countries are lagging behind, but most of them are taking short term approaches of ‘quick fixes’ on standards of the Arabic language, but the keen support of the UAE government in this regard is notable (21-3-47). The final note on curriculum was suggested by N17 and N26 who highlighted that in Lebanon, there is a strength in the holistic approach to curriculum and to the established culture of literary innovation in Arabic (17-3-20). These findings are significant for the discussion regarding the next steps for language policy decisions, and the gaps in the current policies.

4.4.2 Individual versus Government Supported Initiatives

A proportion of participants shared that there are some private sector level initiatives in other Arab countries, that emulated some of what is happening in the UAE. For example, participants brought up similar reading initiatives that took place in Lebanon and Egypt. But in both instances, the different contexts of the countries, namely the budgets allocated for such initiatives made a difference in the impact they had on learners. N14 (14-3-112), N27 (27-2-59), N8 and N1 (1-4-12) additionally referred to practices in Lebanon and Oman that are driven by private schools, where effective practices in Arabic instruction are emphasized and recognized. For example, N8 explained, “I’m aware also of several private sector,

like private schools' initiatives, not government initiatives, I mean existing programs in Lebanon by the way to teach the language," (8-3-65). Finally, N21 (21-6-25) noted that there have been some attempts to emulate ALI in countries like Morocco.

4.4.3 Regional Arab Efforts

On a closing note on this particular theme, N19 and N21 (21-1-33) stressed that what the UAE is achieving is pioneering work, while N19 (19-4-33) further added that it is not the only country. He referred to several Arab initiatives that are modest in resources and capacity that have supported the Arabic language. For example, N19 highlighted projects of the organization that he directs in terms of the levelled Arabic readers project that had a significant impact on Arab readers and learners regionally, when he noted, " دليل تصنيف كتب المطالعة...فيما يتعلق بتعيين المستويات القرائية للكتب صار ،التصنيف لحوالي ٦٠٠٠ كتاب وأكثر من كتب المطالعة الصادرة في مختلف دور النشر العربية..." meaning that the organization classified around 6000 Arabic readers in levels based on a specific and recognized set of standards, published by Arab publishing houses [my translation] (19-5-6).

4.5 Impact and Implications of ALI

This section includes summaries of participants' views on two particular areas: participants' perceived impact of ALI on learners and the educators' community, and the implications of ALI on curriculum and teachers' pedagogy in Arabic language in the UAE.

4.5.1 Impact on Learners and the General Public

When asked about their perceptions of the impact of ALI on learners, all participants referred primarily to the impact of the *Arabic reading challenge*. This is the first one that came to their mind. Participants discussed the growing participation and engagement over the past few years in the *Arabic reading challenge*. For example, N18 explained: "We know as educators that it has a huge impact on improving the language of the students" (18-4-20). More specifically, N27 stressed that the reading challenge did have a profound impact, locally and beyond the UAE,

in changing the attitudes towards reading and the conversations around reading (27-3-35). She reported that every school dedicated space and time in the form of 10 minutes a day where the whole school community is actively engaged in reading (27-3-35). Participants thought that this is a lot of investment made to ensure attitudes towards reading change (See N27, N29, & N21).

In spite of the perceived notable impact of the ALI on learners, particularly the *Arabic reading challenge*, a number of participants thought that there was no evident impact on learners' skills to use the Arabic language. They separated the issue of the drive for reading and the improvement of skills, given the particular context of this initiative, and did not perceive them as directly linked. For example, N2 (2-6-13) and N15 (15-5-67) and N21 (21-5-18) explained that the reading challenge was highly invested in but did not reach all learners, because there were many children who did not participate in this specific initiative. N21 questioned the motivation of learners to participate in the *Arabic reading challenge* and wondered whether they thought it is a new initiative and wanted to try it, or because it was a real drive for them to develop their reading habits (21-5-33).

The other key emerging theme was that ALI contributed to raising the profile of the Arabic language in the UAE. A proportion of participants commented on how the Arabic language is now viewed from a new perspective. N3 (3-5-23), N4 (4-4-58), N26 (26-4-37) and N24 (24-6-3) commented on how learners started to perceive the importance of their native language from their personal contact with students of all age groups.

In addition, N4, N5, N22 and N18 commented extensively on how parents got engaged and more involved in reading with their kids. N5 explained: "I felt that teachers happily spoke about [the reading challenge]. They felt that this is very important for them...yes...and the way they delivered the message to the students with pride. This is number one for them" (5-5-14). Similarly, N11 explained how students were engaged in the Lughati initiative in Sharjah and this was evident in the digital footprints as seen on this initiative's application (11-6-72).

On the other end of the spectrum, a considerable number of participants shared more neutral perspectives of the ALI. For example, N15 and N8 questioned whether ALI had any impact. N8 thought that some private schools were only trying to respond to ALI and comply with some limited requirements, but there remains a serious gap between school response level and the authorities or policy level

planning of the ALI (8-6-4). N2 (2-1-34) believed that impact was variable and inconsistent for learners, because he argued that those who participated in the *Arabic reading challenge* had different levels of competence of the Arabic language.

4.5.2 Implications for Teaching and Curriculum

The participants discussed some implications of ALI on teachers, curriculum and pedagogy of the Arabic language. A proportion highlighted the role of school inspections as a significant drive in raising the profile of the Arabic language for practitioners. When school inspections are brought up in this context, the participants were referring specifically to private international school inspections that were described in the literature and in the beginning of this chapter, whereby the Arabic language used to be given less emphasis. For example, N12 (12-6-28), N18 (18-1-32), and N2 (2-1-25) expressed, how the best impact of ALI over the past 10 years, has been achieved when schools began to meet the minimum Ministry of Education requirements in terms of time allocation for the Arabic language in schools. This also meant ensuring that this happens across all types of school curricula, and that all teachers of Arabic have a minimum level of qualification, as they explained. N12 stressed: "...it was not the level that we would hope for, but it means that the worst practitioners [of Arabic] are out of the market now" (12-6-23). On the other hand, N28 explained how ALI addressed curriculum, but was dismayed that the teaching aspect was left untouched (28-6-5).

As for curriculum, participants shared some changes that they felt were significant at the level of learning outcomes and resources. For example, N10 explained that curriculum for Arab speakers changed drastically, and the content of the textbook now, compared to ten years back, is more linked to the realities of the learners (10-5-18). N27 emphasized that, in addition to the changes in the teaching and learning, the ALI affected how the standard forms of Arabic is used, and how the curriculum was mapped out (27-4-16). Finally, N28 spoke about some notable and frequent improvements in the curriculum of the Arabic language (28-1-26).

A high proportion of participants reported a growth in publishing houses that publish authentic children's literature in the Arabic language. Participants explained how the publishing of levelled readers in Arabic was a growing trend to meet students' different levels of ability in reading. This need grew out of the increasing

demands of school inspections of the Arabic language. The *Arabic reading challenge* also started more authors to write and publish to support the growing demands of schools and the general public for more books. N17 explained that the Sharjah book fair was making a major difference when it came to awareness towards Arabic (17-5-32). Similarly, N20 explained how the book publishing process developed in the recent years because of the focus on Arabic and the demand for reading (20-2-31).

Equally, participants commented on how schools started putting efforts on better library resourcing and better use of Arabic literature. N16 (16-4-42), N4 (4-3-28), N9 (9-5-44) and N10 (10-5-28) discussed the impact of ALI on teaching and curriculum enrichment through improved resourcing of all types of books including digital material. N4 explained: "...teachers want to prepare their students to participate in the reading challenge, so this has got schools to equip themselves more with Arabic books..." (4-4-46).

Participants reported about noted exchanges across schools of best practice in the teaching of the Arabic language. N23 noted, from her experience, how schools were partnering up and joining efforts to exchange best practice (23-6-1). They were learning from each other and they were clearly positively affected by the pedagogies being exchanged amongst them. Similarly, N5 talked about the effectiveness of the Living Arabic platform initiative that brought teachers of Arabic together (5-1-20).

A few participants shared that the impact of ALI was not always visible, or clearly defined. N29 thought that teachers were not seen to be changing any of their pedagogical practices. He explained that only teachers who were involved in the *Arabic reading challenge* had to change their pedagogy or improve their strategies (29-5-74). Also, N9 stressed that impact on the teaching approaches was not always visible as she noted: "... sometimes there is a separation in their mind and in their action. This is a reading challenge then we go to Arabic lessons and teach grammar so there is a disconnect" (9-5-48).

4.6 Alternatives and Future Approaches to Arabic L1 Policy

Participants tended to propose alternatives to the current situation of the Arabic language, and suggest future pathways, from the range of backgrounds and expertise that they represent. In this final section of the findings I summarize their views that emerged at different points during the interviews, particularly when I

asked them about what they thought was still not brought to the table of the discussion about Arabic language issues, and what policies they would hope to see the UAE and other Arab countries taking forward. Parts of these points may have been featured in previous parts of this chapter, because the earlier questions prompted these points, but now they are phrased in a structure that reflects next steps.

4.6.1 Next steps in Teaching Capacity, Qualifications and Licensing of Teachers in the UAE

In this sub-section, participants considered that all the gaps they identified previously in the discussion about implications of ALI on teaching, need to be addressed in this sub-section on next steps. Participants addressed issues of Arabic language teacher education and preparation, licensing and professional development as a priority for policy makers, as they have direct influence of outcomes of learners of the Arabic language.

Participants explained that teacher education programs in colleges in the UAE and the Arab region have clear gaps in terms of Arabic language and pedagogical knowledge. According to N4, it should be identified and clear where effective teachers come from, and from which higher education institutions, and start emulating and disseminating best practices coming from these higher education institutions (4-5-21). N15 emphasized that the issues that have not been raised effectively include these gaps around knowing how to teach the Arabic language effectively (5-6-14). N9 explained:

“There is an added problem here in the UAE ...but an added problem that 3/4 of our Arabic teachers in private schools, and to a certain extent, public schools, we are importing; you do something about teacher preparation... but 70% of your teachers are coming from Egypt and Jordan and even from Lebanon, who have studied Arabic literature, not Arabic pedagogy.” (9-4-37)

Some participants added that teacher education is not necessarily the influential factor, but the issue lies in empowering teachers and motivating them. N10 (10-2-2) and N24 (24-7-27) spoke about how the government needs to regulate private sector salary scales for Arabic teachers and make them more equitable compared to teachers of other subjects. N24 even added that such improvements by

the government can change the stereotypical view of the Arabic teacher and empower them more positively (24-7-27).

Adding to this crucial issue, a proportion of participants explained how the teacher licensing efforts and decisions are important developments in the education policy landscape of the UAE. To elaborate, N17 explained: “If the government licensing efforts are not coupled with the required teacher training and preparation, then it will not have the desired impact” (N17-5-18).

N21(21-7-12), N18 (18-7-1), and N28 (28-10-29) explained how this process needs to be further developed and taken more seriously. On a less optimistic note, N12 thought that the new licensing process may not work because,

“...people who set these up are the same ones who have created the problems in schools now, in the ministry, and the people who would for example in the case of the teacher [...] who would be evaluating participants’ classroom practice which is a part of the certificate would be the existing ministry of education supervisors” (12-5-33)

For N22, the issue of teacher licensing is a dilemma and a vicious circle for policy makers. She believed that if they raise the bar in licensing requirements, which they are going to do, they will run out of any qualified cadres of teachers to make it through the process, and if they lower the expectations, the system will continue to struggle with the lower quality of performance in the market (22-2-15).

Participants discussed teacher capacity as an issue that requires high level attention. N14 (14-4-33) and N27 (27-3-4) explained that building professional learning communities and supporting teacher education is of high value and crucial to learners’ outcomes. N1 acknowledged that work done through *Living Arabic* initiative of KHDA is appreciated and needs to be developed further improve the dissemination of effective practice. He noted: “This is very important, like sharing best practices, this should be like a rule ...So I believe, if you turn it into a ‘should’; each school in yearly basis should do something” (1-8-18).

Other participants identified examples of best practices and suggested that these, together with research findings, should be taken into consideration by policy-makers. For example, N21 suggested that standard based approaches are identified as best practice for teaching and learning in MSA (21-4-40). Similarly, N2 suggested that linking patriotism to the teaching of Arabic is not a sufficient approach for encouraging students to love the Arabic language and be engaged enough (2-5-12). Finally, N7 identified two directions for improvements in teaching of the Arabic

language. He considered that teaching and learning need another level of planning and should focus on modernizing the Arabic language usage and functionality, with the mindset that policy needs to consider new tools to solve the Arabic language issues, that fit with the needs of today's learners (7-3-41).

In sum, issues raised around teacher training and licensing remain major problems, due to the lack of clarity around the feasibility of their implementation. However, this being said, participants acknowledged clearly that the upcoming teaching licensing is a perceived solution to some of the concerns about teaching and learning of the Arabic language.

4.6.2 Next steps in Arabic Language Resources and Curriculum

The lack of resources for the teaching of the Arabic language is a key emerging theme in this research inquiry. All participants mentioned in one way or another that the teaching and learning of Arabic is challenged by the lack of a solid curriculum and supportive resources, and obviously this is a continuing debate around what features of a suitably effective curriculum would be, in spite of the recent updates.

According to a number of participants, the curriculum still needs more serious work. Several developments took place over the past years, and it moved in the direction of literature-based standards.

Some participants suggested involving better expertise in the development of the curricula at a national level. For example, N6 called for improving the literature sources in the curriculum and bringing it more to life and make it relevant for learners to enjoy, with literature that responds to their needs and supports global and social issues (6-5-42). Most participants suggested that the existing curriculum needs review to meet the changing needs of learners. N6 (6-7-15) and N21 (21-1-1) suggested to work smarter on curriculum for K-12 and reconsider the current key textbook for L1 learners of Arabic. N12 supported this suggestion clarifying that policy-makers cannot be solving the same problems with the same old tools (12-5-33).

Other participants such as N26 noted that developments in curriculum can be basic to meet learners needs. She explained that decision makers do not have to create fancy extensive strategies and kits but go back to the basics of literacy

approaches and make the curriculum sufficiently functional (26-6-11). N2 suggested that curriculum needs to be well researched and planned based on multi-national learners' needs, when he explained: "We have first to understand the nature of our students. We have to deal with them not as one size fits all. In terms of curriculum" (2-7-21). Finally, N24 was critical of the existing curriculum. He explained that curricular design is very weak and over dependent on only one model whereas other models such as the backward design are left unexplored, and conceptual approaches are not heard of when speaking about the existing curriculum (24-7-29).

4.6.3 Next Steps for Leadership and Accountability in Policy Making

Participants discussed issues of responsibility and accountability at the decision-making levels of ALI. They tackled issues related to the impact of the leadership direction of the ALI and how it was infiltrating at the executive level. For example, they addressed the levels of consistency and sustainability of efforts through ALI, as well as the directions for future accountability and improvement of policy making for the Arabic language.

Participants referred to continuity and sustainability of practices as key factors for success of initiatives. N9 (9-2-20), N14 (14-7-4) and N7 raised this point, where he specifically thought that people are keen to support the leadership's priorities, but implementation is often falling short of consistent practice (7-4-38). Participants suggested that this gap needed to be avoided in planning for future policies. They stressed, however, that MBR is establishing long term practice at policy and initiative level in spite of the perceived inconsistencies. N14 explained: "...it's not about the twitter feed, it's not about taking pictures, it's about making a real impact and the only thing you can do that is through year over year of sustained work" (14-7-4). N6, on the contrary, thought that the current leadership approaches involve temporary measures but not long-term solutions to solving the issues of literacy in Arabic that are based on research evidence (6-8-4).

Dealing with this same concern from another perspective, some participants saw a need to address the gap between the authority level planning of ALI and the realities of learners and educators. N2 called for the need to reduce the gap between authority level decisions and the realities of learners (2-4-17). Similarly, N19 (19-4-7) discussed how next policy attempts need stronger links to reality, to

avoid extremes in language policy choices, and to conduct a process for policy design that engages all relevant stakeholders. N2 agreed with this view when he expressed that further planning for a full cycle of factors need to take place to have a better impact (2-6-42). Another key reason for limited impact may be coming from explanations proposed by N25 and N8. They both stressed that the problem was that every initiative was introduced at the same time, during a rather short period of time (See for example 8-6-43). N27 and N8 reminded that constant changes should stop because that affects the level of impact (27-3-12). N23 called for the need to amend the UAE national agenda targets and prioritize the improvement of Arabic language competence (23-3-10).

Some participants argued that there was a need for a comprehensive policy that can address the critical concerns about executive level leadership of the Arabic language policies. N27 explained, "...we need a comprehensive framework that is based on effective practices and that has all the elements in harmony; so more of a cohesive framework with a long-term vision" (27-3-9). N9 suggested that the solutions that are presented to practitioners at the moment are one-dimensional, not multifaceted, to address a complicated situation. So, for driving real change in that respect, N9 stressed that the authorities need to stay away from a one-dimensional and punitive approaches, referring to the existing curriculum (9-6-23).

Some participants suggested that the UAE specifically needs language policies that give clear guidelines for how the system should approach the Arabic language in vis-à-vis other languages in the UAE. For example, N5 called for a clear language policy coming from the government to support schools in regulating how children learn all the different languages as she explained: "I would love to see as a requirement for all schools...a language policy....it gives you guidelines where you are going, why I'm using Arabic here more than English" (5-6-25). Similarly, N17 expressed, "When we speak about policy, we can consider the landscape as one. The reality and policy have to align, particularly in private schools" (17-6-10). N7 raised the issue of accountability to achieve targets. He stressed that the executive level is the responsibility of the institutions to take forward and support the Arabic language through accountability, and not only through policy makers themselves (7-5-20).

Participants proposed a range of policy ideas that affect the Ministry of Education and the operating colleges of education in the UAE. For instance, N21

proposed a collaboration between the MoE and colleges of education and have a constructive dialogue that can culminate in better alignment of targets for learners that they both need to strive to achieve (21-7-14). She added that improving assessment practices to have an ongoing record of students' achievements, especially in the emerging early literacy, will support policy and authority decisions (21-8-16). This view was supported by both N23 (23-5-8) and N9 (9-6-33) when they called for developing international benchmarking assessment tools for the Arabic language to track progress of students in the key literacy skills at an early stage.

During their conversations, and their conclusions, participants focused on the issue of political support that is crucial for reviving a language. For example, N24 (24-6-28) and N19 (19-4-9) were confident that Arabic language policies and pedagogy from the Arab world deserve joint efforts and support, whereby countries have to persevere in finding a bespoke model for strengthening and sustaining the Arabic language. As another example, N29 spoke about a vision for a framework of standards that is unified for all Arab countries, that emulates the type of work that the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) does. This would exert an effort on countries at policy planning levels to conduct and use comparative research findings for the improvement of learners' outcomes (29-7-9).- Expressed in different words, N29 thought that there needs to be a more serious conversation around the issues of the Arabic language at the policy and decision-making levels. N29 suggested that everything that needs to be said has been raised, except for a serious enough conversation. According to N29,

"They make a step towards this and then there is an abrupt, not stop, but there is no coordinated action that is taken from top to bottom or bottom up that really signals the right shift towards the right direction...These are the issues. I think they have to do with a lack of leadership element on that exact point" (29-4-25).

4.6.4 Future Regulations and Policy Suggestions

As presented previously, most of participants spoke about a strategic level direction for a policy on the Arabic language as a mother tongue, and on the subsequently needed policies for teaching and designing the curriculum for the Arabic language. A number of participants took the discussion to a more pragmatic

level and suggested what can actually be done. I present these points in the table below concisely in bullet style statements, while referencing the data source.

<i>Participant proposed policies/regulations at an executive level</i>	<i>Data source</i>
<i>Arabic language to be a medium of instruction of subjects other than the Arabic language arts. Participants thought this is useful and can revive the legacy of Arabic as the language of science.</i>	N15 (15-6-31) N2 (2-4-30) N9 (9-5-60)
<i>Increase the time allocation of Arabic language lessons; currently the regulation of the number of lessons of the Arabic language is hardly supporting students to acquire the language.</i>	N14 (14-7-30) N1(1-4-35)
<i>Develop more partnerships between the Ministry of Education and the private sector at the level of the curriculum design to address the critical issues around the teaching of the Arabic language</i>	N9 (9-6-7) N21 (21-7-18) N16 (16-3-38) N23 (23-7-26)
<i>Regulate a mandate for teaching Arabic during the early years of schooling to promote competence of MSA in lieu of the prevalence of dialect as students develop their language skills.</i>	N19 (19-3-24) N16 (16-3-8)
<i>Arabic language must be made an entry requirement for university study for Arab speaking students, through setting competence criteria or issuing minimum scores in the Arabic language to enter university.</i>	N2 (2-5-10) N12 (12-7-56) N18 (18-5-21) N22 (22-1-27)
<i>Arabic language competence to be a job market demand to ensure that the Arabic language is investment worthy for future employment and align the role of universities in this path</i>	N14 (14-5-3) N22 (22-3-15) N25 (25-3-1)

Table -3- Participant Proposed Policies/Regulations at an Executive Level

4.6.5 Use of the Arabic Language in the Public Arena

In addition, to the regulations that are pertinent to the Arabic language at the levels of K-12 education, some participants spoke about how Arabic is seen in the public space, and the perceived gaps of the use of the language. This finding is not directly linked to my main research questions, but my interview questions invited participants to elaborate on key themes that they thought were pertinent to the support of the Arabic language.

A few participants suggested how the use of the Arabic language in the public space and the media has an effect on learners' competence. N13 spoke at length about how a number of local and regional television stations started featuring shows that enforce the use of the Arabic language and educate the public about common expressions. Some of this content included how the different uses of dialects are compared to the use of standard Arabic (13-3-29). Similarly, N1 raised the issue of how Arabic needs to be used wisely in public space as it affects learners' acquisition of the language in indirect ways. He was critical of the low quality of Arabic seen around the country whereby learners can be strongly affected by what they read around them. N1 called for a policy around improving the regulations of *Arabization* rather than translation, and how this is used in public spaces (1-7-34). He explained, "If there should be an initiative, the government should be very accurate with these people, the companies, let's say any translation that needs to be [done] with people outside... You have no idea how important this can be in terms...speaking linguistically" (1-5-13).

Along the same lines, N3 discussed improving the policies that can protect the Arabic language in general and its relative use in the public spheres (3-5-29). Finally, N19 proposed a joint effort at the level of all Arab countries effort to promote and support the use of the Arabic language in general terms. He placed high value on the need for collaborative efforts of all the parties that are capable of investing in the Arabic language and influence its legislative actions, to make a difference on its use in the public arena. N19 suggested,

"من هيك عمقول إنه الحاجات هائلة، وأقول دائماً تظافر الجهود.. على الصعيد الدولي، هي جهات مدعومة من. في كثير نشاطات، في مركز المدينة الملك عبد العزيز للغة العربية، هذا موضوع بالغ الأهمية."
"that's why I'm saying that the need for supporting the Arabic language is immense, and it's about joint efforts, at international levels, and at levels of entities that are

government supported...there's a lot going on, [e.g.] at the Abdul Aziz Centre for the Arabic language. This is a highly significant issue" (my translation) (19-5-10).

4.6.6 Bilingualism

The final theme in this section is about a general policy model. When I asked participants about what they thought were the alternatives to current language policies, a number of participants raised the issue of *bilingualism* as a language model for the UAE.

Participants explained that if bilingualism policies are fully embedded, this should not happen at the expense of the Arabic language, and hence the need for distinct and comprehensive policies for language. For example, N16 explained that the embeddedness of bilingualism should be linked with a clear rationale that highlights the way this affects our day to day communication (16-4-3). Moreover, N28 supported the possibility of investing in bilingual systems of education that place genuine value on both languages equally without compromises (28-8-32). Finally, N23 supported this view, with a condition that this does not happen at the expense of Arabic (23-2-11).

Additionally, in the context of exploring future alternatives, N19 made the point that countries should think creatively of limitations of the Arabic language use and change them to opportunities for promoting *bilingualism* in the context of career pathways (19-3-21). Finally, N26 admitted that language choices for UAE are a dilemma, because the government has to balance targets and priorities in developing their language model (26-6-20).

4.7 Summary of Chapter 4

Chapter 4 presented summaries of the emerging findings and key concepts (See Figure 1). The summarized findings focused on how the participants perceived ALI and their key features from their own perspectives, and how the participants perceived to be the problems with these ALI. The findings also incorporated the implications of the ALI on the pedagogy and the curriculum of the Arabic language.

In terms of the perceptions of the role of ALI, the themes emerging from the interviews concluded that the ALI were launched in the context of challenged first

language learners in their usage of the Arabic language. Participants perceived ALI as political drivers that set the scene for raising the profile of the Arabic language in the UAE. The participants detailed the key perceptions of ALI from K-12 pedagogical point of view. The participants identified the role of leaders of the UAE as key in setting the vision for the Arabic language for the UAE and for the region.

Second, participants perceived a number of problems of ALI. They defined a policy-practice gap. The findings showed that there is absence of clear Arabic language education policies that can inform the direction of language of instruction at K-12 levels and subsequently at higher education levels. Interviewees critiqued the ambiguous regulations that affect the pedagogy and the curriculum of teaching. Participants also discussed how the role of the executive level leadership influenced the quality of the execution of ALI. In this context, the participants situated the ALI in their wider regional context and stressed the need to re-think Arabic language policy approaches for the Arab region.

Finally, the participants discussed the implications of ALI, namely on the pedagogical approaches and the curriculum of the Arabic language in the UAE and in the wider Arab countries. This included a view of how the issues with the Arabic language compare across the wider context of the Arab world, and what has worked or did not work in supporting the language.

Additionally, I summarized the alternative solutions, or how the *problematization* of the Arabic language could be conceptualized differently from the perspectives of the participants. These alternative problematizations included professional development and preparation of teachers, professional training and licensing efforts in the UAE, teaching and learning issues, and the Arabic language resources and curriculum. At strategic policy levels, participants also presented their views about issues of responsibility and accountability in policy making and put forward a number of pragmatic regulatory pathways. Finally, I concluded the findings with themes that addressed the use of Arabic in the public arena and bilingualism as a proposed language policy model for the UAE.

The next chapter will analyse the emerging themes following the critical discourse analysis (CDA) approach of the “What’s the problem represented to be (WPR)” (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016b). I will further use the historical discourse analysis approach of Wodak (Wodak & Meyer, 2009) as a lens to analyse the underpinning issues of the ALI and how these can be used to frame potential future

approaches. These two levels of CDA will help produce an integrative critical discourse analysis, that can inform the outcomes of this inquiry.

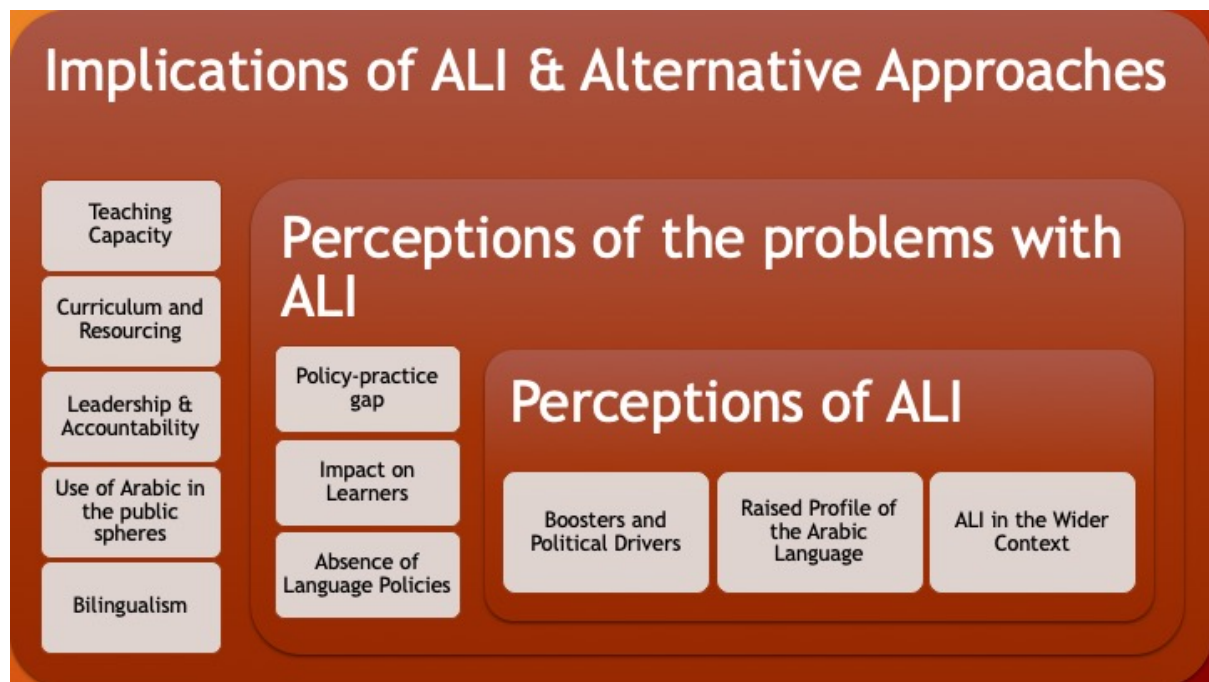


Figure -1- Summary of Thematic Data Analysis

CHAPTER 5

CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

5.1 Introduction to Chapter 5

This chapter has two objectives. I begin by analyzing both of the interview texts and the *Arabic language initiatives* (ALI) government texts through the lens of the “*What’s the problem represented to be*” (*WPR*) conceptual framework (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016b). Second, I proceed to analyze the ALI text using the discourse-historical analysis (DHA) approach of Wodak (2011). I completed both sections of the analyses using the text of each of (1) the interviewees discourse that emerged in response to the key *WPR* questions, and (2) the Arabic language initiatives (ALI) discourse. This step helped me to interrogate the participants’ *problematizations* of the Arabic language and analyze the discursive themes that can contribute to the understanding of the discourse of ALI (Goodwin, 2009; Wodak & Meyer, 2009). Both stages of discourse analysis culminated in better understanding of the current situation of the Arabic language and uncovered the discursive issues that impact educators and learners (Goodwin, 2009).

The research questions (*RQ*) of this inquiry were focused on investigating the participants’ perceptions and problems of ALI, and on assessing their implications for curriculum and teaching methodology of the Arabic language. The approaches I used in this chapter for discourse analysis supported the *RQ*’s when the discursive effects of the ALI were identified and analyzed. Through analyzing the discursive aspects of ALI, I probed conceptual underpinnings of the status of the Arabic language. It is not the intention of these approaches to present arguments about the best way to address the problems of the acquisition of the Arabic language by L1 learners in the context of the UAE (Goodwin, 2009). My conceptual understanding of the core causes of the issues of the Arabic language led to a focused reading of how this discourse about Arabic will evolve and possibly shape future policy.

5.2 “What’s the Problem Represented to be” (WPR) Analysis of ALI and Interview Texts

For the purpose of this discourse analysis, I selected five main ALI texts as a sample (Appendix F). They were the key texts that were given particular attention by most interviewees. I gave them codes for the purpose of the analysis used in this chapter. In no particular order, these are: (1) *Arabic Language Charter* (Emirates 24/7, 2012) / ALI-1, (2) *Arabic for Life* / (Arabic for Life, 2014) ALI-2, (3) *Arabic Reading Challenge* (Arab Reading Challenge, 2019)/ ALI-3, (4) *Arabic Award* (MBR Global Initiatives, 2019) /ALI-4, (5) *Law number 2/12 of year 2008* (Emaratallyoum, 2008)/ ALI-5 & (6) *Arabic Language Academy in Sharjah*/ (Arabic Language Academy, 2016) ALI-6. The four problematizations that I identified in these ALI texts are as follows:

1. Concern about Arab patriotism and the identity of the UAE
2. Challenges in Arabic language teaching and learning
3. The need to modernize the Arabic language and develop it as a language for the future
4. Prevalence of the English language

Each individual ALI text was initiated with the rationale of improving the status of the Arabic language, either explicitly or implicitly. The statements of purpose of these initiatives refer to needs for improvements in the status of the Arabic language (Appendix F). It is also noticeable through these texts that there are expressly used ‘positive’ utterances with terminology that reflects a forward-looking mindset. There are also problematizations that could be identified other than those associated with the status of the Arabic language, but I chose to focus on these specific ones as they were more common and consistently implied.

As for the participants, they presented, justified, and interpreted the ALI as a government response to the perceived situation of the Arabic language in a range of ways, as discussed in the previous chapter. Participants responses were complex, and sometimes tended to address other issues connected with the causes and implications of ALI. Participants presented the following four problematizations, as discussed in the previous chapter.

1. Teaching and learning of Arabic
2. Prevalence of English & the communicative function of Arabic in the UAE

3. Teacher preparation
4. Regulation/policy implementation

In the section below, my approach is as follows: I dedicate a sub-section for each of the problematizations identified in both the ALI texts and the interviewee texts. Then, for each individual problematization, I applied WPR techniques for analysis, which included identification and analysis of ideas, narratives, and discursive similarities between the two types of texts. I provide an analysis of the views of interviewees who share the ALI text problematizations. Then I present the views of those interviewees who provide alternatives to the problematizations in the ALI text.

As shown in Figure (2), interviewees tended to agree with three of the ALI text problematizations, the ones shown in the middle of the diagram, which are (1) teaching and learning of Arabic and (2) the prevalence of English & the communicative function of Arabic, and (3) Arabic & patriotism.

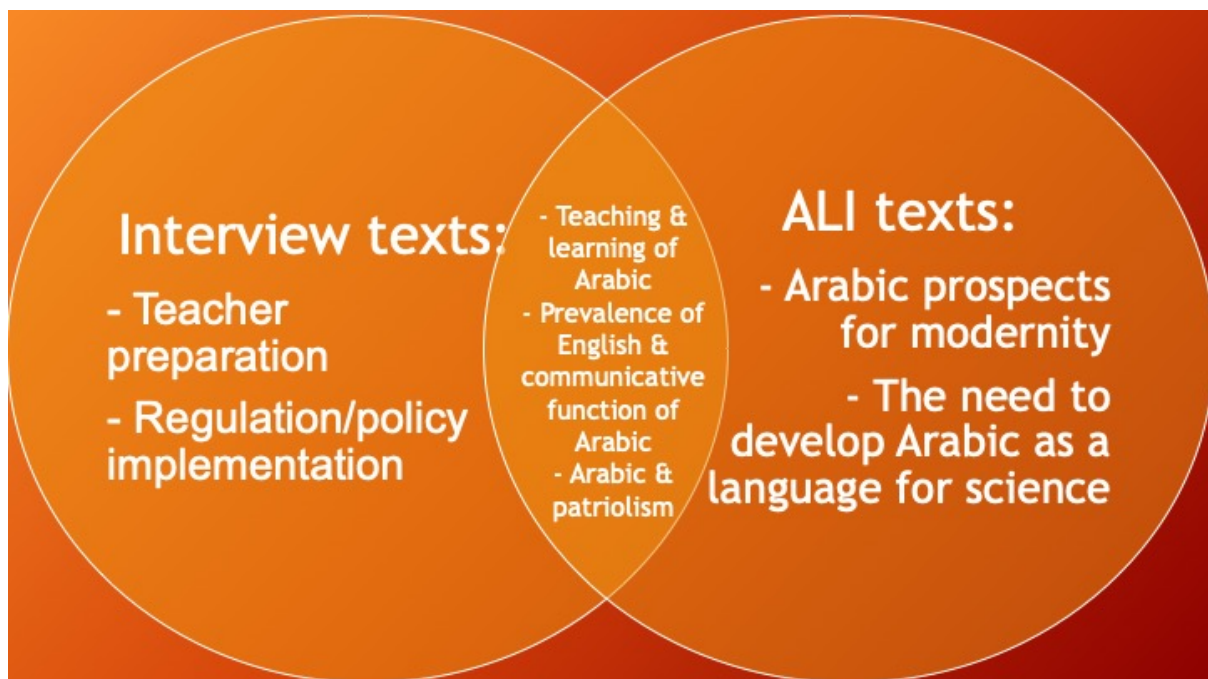


Figure -2-
WPR Analysis of ALI and Interview Texts

5.2.1 Challenges Facing Arabic Language Teaching and Learning

The ALI texts acknowledge challenges facing the Arabic language. For example, the Arabic Language Charter, in one of its published aims reflects concern about the use of the Arabic language. It is stated that the charter seeks to “protect the essence of the language and enhance its usage,” (ALI-1), with an indication that Arabic is currently not used sufficiently or is facing challenges. Similarly, the text of “*Arabic for life*”, explains in its introduction that this document seeks to “modernize the pedagogy of the Arabic language,” suggesting that the teaching and learning is currently outdated (ALI-2).

The *Arabic Language Charter* (ALI-1) further calls for setting a new vision for the teaching and learning of Arabic, indicating dissatisfaction with the current views of Arabic. The introduction of (ALI-2) explicitly emphasizes the need to “abandon theoretical approaches and adopt pragmatic stances in dealing with the language,” (ALI-2). The text uses the translation of the term ‘optimistic attitude’ in Arabic, in its suggested ways for approaching the Arabic language. The language used in the *preamble* of ALI-2, in the Arabic language, translates into ‘modernize’, ‘new vision’, and ‘quality changes’. These terms suggest dissatisfaction with the current system of education of the Arabic language (ALI-2). This terminology has a connotation that the current approaches used in teaching the Arabic language are dated, dull and restrictive. Similar interpretations can be made of the *Arabic reading challenge* (ALI-3) and the *Arabic award* (ALI-4). The text of (ALI-3) features an objective about the need to “improve Arabic language skills, including fluency and eloquence in Arabic speech.” This identification is linked to skills that most learners have been challenged with over time as evident in PIRLS assessments results (PIRLS, 2016), as discussed in an earlier chapter..

The discursive devices used to convince the readers of the need to overcome current challenges are reflective of an exercise of power (Wodak, 2011; Wodak & Meyer, 2009). The text talks about quality changes, and the text is coming from an authority that can exercise power to implement these quality changes and modernize the way the Arabic language is being taught. Also, the text employs undertones of optimism that surround the identified problematizations, and the messages suggesting updating and modernizing the pedagogy of the Arabic language. In ALI-2, there is an implicit call for modernization and futuristic outward looking approaches

that can play a role in convincing the reader or the people of this need, as will be further elaborated in the next subsection.

Interviewees tended to agree with the views reflected in most of the ALI texts which perceive teaching and learning of Arabic as an area of critical concern. They described the situation using more explicit terms than those used in the ALI text. For example, the ALI text used terms such as “modernize the pedagogy”, “abandon theoretical approaches and adopt more pragmatic stance”. The interviewees agreed and used terms such as ‘traditional’, ‘conventional’, ‘static’, ‘not attractive’ to describe the learning experiences in Arabic language classrooms. For instance, interviewee N28 explained: “A lot of Arabic is taught in the traditional conventional way of a teacher speaking over the heads of students for extensive amounts of time.” He concluded that learners are “disengaged”, because “they don’t have a vital role in the learning,” (28-3-2). This view was shared by interviewees N1, N4, N12 & N24 who also thought of the pedagogy as falling behind in most schools in the UAE. The text as such provided an alternative representation which is “[learners] have to have a vital role in the learning.”

The quality of teaching and learning is attributed to a complex matrix of factors as described by a number of interviewees. The ALI text made reference to the need for “quality changes” in the area of Arabic, without identifying what these are. Interviewee N9 called it “a dilemma,” (9-1-14), which is significant in reflecting the complexity of the problem. To elaborate, Interviewee N9 explained how the problem needs to be dealt with from all aspects and called for bringing Arabic “back to life” claiming that “it’s not a langue vivant” anymore (9-6 -27). She was referring to teacher qualifications, curriculum gaps, and lack of benchmarking of assessments as contributing factors in the quality of teaching and learning (9-6-27). Again, the interviewee text N9 is providing some causes that need to be discussed for addressing Arabic language teaching challenges.

Similarly, interviewees N1 and N7 described a “gap” and a “concern”, and emphasized that for this concern to be addressed, the right people need to be chosen to teach the language, referring to the quality of teachers and their qualifications (1-5-22). Although he emphasized that the new teacher licensing regulation is in progress, he still thought that the way it is implemented is still “chaos” (1-5-22). Also, interviewee N7 described “gaps” in the education system of Arabic but was optimistic that the government identified these gaps before it is too late

(translated 7-1-30). Interviewee N7 was recognized the alternative solution, the licensing, and gave his opinion through the impact it is having on the teachers in his team who experienced it.

From these interviewee transcript texts, it is noted that they were discursively consistent with the ALI text in their representations of the problem. The interviewees placed emphasis on the gaps and the challenges, much more than what is reflected in the ALI text. This being said, different interviewees made different points of emphasis in describing the pedagogy of Arabic. Their representations of the problem were overlapping. Not all of them provided alternative representations or root causes for the challenges. For example, some interviewees related the causes of weaknesses in the pedagogy to the lack of an effective curriculum, while others referred to lack of clear benchmarking assessments. Many others linked this challenge in the pedagogy to the lack of teacher preparation. In this sense, the issues of concern overlapped, and were problematized somehow differently although the end result for all of them was the same.

5.2.2. Prevalence of the English Language and the Communicative Function of the Arabic Language

This problematization is mostly seen in ALI-5. The text of this initiative encourages all government entities to sustain the Arabic language, use it and apply it in forums and conferences as a first language. The text from Arabic translates as: "...end the controversy of the English language," in evidence that English may have been used excessively, which triggered the issuance of this law in the first place. The text also re-enforces that Arabic, "should be the first language," which confirms that English has been previously used excessively in lieu of the first language. The law issued with this context in mind reflects contention around what the first language of the UAE is. The text also reflects the 'lived effect' on the people prior to the issuance of this law, when the text mentions "end the controversy of the English." This text practically articulated a justification for the weakening of Arabic, which is, in effect, the prevalence of the English language

Along the same lines, ALI-4 text encourages the enforcement of the Arabic language from another angle. The objective as stated, "Raising awareness of the importance of personal and institutional initiatives to develop the Arabic language,"

subjectifies institutions and individuals, and is discursively encouraging them to take responsibility for the Arabic language. The text explicitly holds others to account for the development of the language when it reads as, “personal and institutional initiatives”. The text also creates a particular way for understanding the weakened situation of Arabic and offers a proposal that reflects that something can be done to improve the status of Arabic.

The interviewees agree with the ALI texts on problematizing the prevalence of English in the UAE. The ALI text uses terms such as “maintain the Arabic language” in an indication that it may be lost (translated ALI-5). Interviewee N28 suggested that you cannot survive in Dubai if you don’t know English, and that “Arabic is not a language of use in communication, or in learning, or even in research (28-2-15). Similarly, interviewee N15 thought that Arabic is “not necessarily the used language in society in terms of completing your own procedures really, you can do that with English (15-1-18). Interviewee N21 compared the Arabic language to “an endangered species” (21-1-34), suggesting that it needs serious attention. Along these lines, interviewee N7 spoke about “holding on to the Arabic language” (Translated 7-1-16) and used the term “political willingness” (7-1-16) suggesting that these changes need political intervention to work and make a difference. As such, she *politicized* the responsibility of enhancing the Arabic language which is a legitimate endeavour, as suggested by Fehri (2013), who emphasized that language policy changes need political decisions.

Some interviewees seemed to regard the authorities as being responsible for the prevalence of English. In the face of the “diluted Arabic” as described by interviewee N23 (23-4-46) there seems to be limited efforts, or contradictory efforts, by the authorities to make more impactful changes to overcome the prevalence of English. For example, Interviewee N11 explained that, in spite of the efforts, “...we still don’t have that powerful Arabic content,” (11-6-4) for the Arabic language to be empowered and to stand its ground. Also, on a similar note, Interviewee N14 explained how she “...[finds] it shocking that so many higher education institutions are taught in English primarily. It’s the only region in the world I could think of that doesn’t teach in their native language,” (14-1-19). If the government is focused on raising the profile of the Arabic language, it appears to be a contradiction that the authorities make efforts to sustain the Arabic language, when the language of instruction is still English in these government schools, according to the interviewee’s

text. Interviewee N22 explained, “The university is the place that harmed my Arabic the most, because they forced me to study in English,” (22-3-10). In interviewee texts N14 and N22, the text identified the government as a *subject* regarded as responsible for the status quo of English because it is put in opposition to its own contradictory policies.

5.2.3 Concern about Arab Patriotism and the Identity of the UAE as a Nation State

The concern about the UAE national identity through the Arabic language is a notion that is iterated in most of the ALI texts. This problematization suggests that the national identity is at risk when the speakers of Arabic do not use the Arabic language on daily basis. One text features the term ‘nurture’ the Arabic language (ALI-1). The text quotes HH Mohammed bin Rashid (MBR) encouraging the people to ‘uphold the Emirati national identity for future generations’ by using the Arabic language for self-expression’ (ALI-1), indicating that the Arabic language and its associated UAE identity as a nation state need to be carefully supported and maintained. The need for ‘enhancement’ connotes support and maintenance and seems to be alerting against risking the loss of Arabic (ALI-1). The text stresses that through the language, there is a need to, “...enable our future generations to connect with our roots, society and values more effectively,” a statement that suggests that the younger generations are distant from their roots and perhaps not sufficiently connected with their heritage values. Similarly, in ALI-2, the message clearly implies that supporting the Arabic language is a way to maintain the national identity. The messages getting through the ALI-3 again stress ‘patriotism’ and ‘belonging to one nation’ with implications of the valuing unity and solidarity while managing diversity, given the context of the UAE.

The discursive devices used in these texts of ALI-1, ALI-2 and ALI-4 emphasize links of the Arabic language to ‘identity’, and by this they provide alternative representation of the issue of Arabic language. In the Arab culture, and the people of the UAE can hardly argue against the value of their identity in general terms, and hence the strength of the argument of language preservation. In addition, there is a reference to ‘future generations’ in an attempt to convince the audience that there is a strong rationale to accept the mission of this initiative. This persuasive

device is the assumption that no one would disagree with the importance of strengthening the value system of their younger generations.

The interviewee text agreed with the ALI text in many of its ideas. Interviewees N12 and N21 created a “cross-national representation” by considering the situation of the Arabic language vis-a-vis globalization. The text in both instances emphasizes links between Arabic language and the maintenance of the identity in the face of what he called political challenges in the region and globalization, “...for us to not pay sufficient attention to the impact of globalization that we’ve been experiencing in the last decade or 2 or so, is huge,” (12-3-5). Interviewee N12 also emphasized that the language is the key to preserving the unity of the nation, in the face of those challenges,” (12-3-5). Other interview texts, N2, N9, N11, N18 and N29 show consistency in this narrative that Arabic is a priority for the UAE, and that Arabs have to be held accountable to how the younger ones speak the Arabic language and use it (2-2-2), (9-5-3), (18-3-112), (11-3-19) & (29-1-23). Interviewee N7 in particular emphasized the idea that these young learners may become leaders of the UAE, and therefore their inability to speak Arabic may not reflect well on their country if they were to be in a position of power [my translation] (7-3-2).

5.2.4 Arabic Language Prospects for Modernity and the Need to Develop Arabic as a Language for the Future

In several interviews, there were subtle references to the notion that Arabic, as it stands now, may not be sufficiently supportive of scientific disciplines and the areas of innovation and future aspirations of the UAE. This problematization recurs across four of the selected ALI texts. However, almost none of the texts of interviewees articulate this problematization, which is significant.

A number of ALI texts address changes in the infra-structure of Arabic. For example, one text features the phrase, “modernize scientific learning methods through Arabic,” (ALI-1). Also, the translation of the mission statement of ALI-6 reads as such, “Update and refine the vocabulary, and produce up to date dictionaries that meet the needs of speakers in standard Arabic both in current reading and writing.” This inherently suggests that the current vocabulary is not adaptive when users of the language need to address current issues. Similarly, text of (ALI-4) emphasizes “upgrading the Arabic language” and calls for taking other initiatives to “develop the

education and education planning”, with a reflection that the existing structure needs major changes, particularly when the text employs the terms “development of...education thought and use” with a reference to changes in mindsets,” (ALI-4). ALI-6 suggests the need to make changes at the lexical level of the Arabic. It translates from Arabic as follows: “...the revival and refinement of lexicon and supervising the publication of contemporary dictionaries and thesauri that meet the needs of current day speakers and writers of standard Arabic” [my translation]. The statement suggests a need for managing and updating the syntactic infrastructure of the language.

Similarly, ALI-6 text talks about sponsoring programs that “facilitate the learning of the Arabic language”, and “motivate” the youth to learn it and become “innovative” in its arts and literature. These discursive devices suggest that it is a challenging endeavor to learn the language, and hence it needs a level of motivation on the part of the youth to engage in learning it. The use of “innovation” appeals to the young generation that seeks to embrace advancements. Additionally, the text of ALI-4 encourages the young people to “innovate in the development of the various uses of Arabic language”, which reflects a level of dissatisfaction with the current uses of Arabic.

In addition to updating the syntactic structure of Arabic, Arabic is projected as a language of the future in the text of the *Arabic Award* (ALI-4). The objectives statement echoes a call to “raise awareness that the Arabic language is the language of the future and work to crystallize this role and goal in reality,” (ALI-4). In another instance in ALI-1, there is significant focus on the development of the Arabic language to support the world of science. The problematization expressed through the following phrase, “the committee will recommend strategies to modernize scientific learning methods through Arabic that will benefit people across the Arab world,” is about the need to update the language structure in the area of science. The second focus is around the will of the government of the UAE to be a pioneer that leads the way in this development mission of Arabic, when it suggests, “...benefit people from across the Arab world,” (ALI-1). The discursive device used is the motivation that the UAE will be in the lead, which will non-arguably attract the support of the people (ALI-1).

It is worth questioning this particular representation of the ALI texts. It is represented in the ALI texts but not in the interviewee texts. The interviewees, being

the educators and experts that they are, did not think there is a concern about the capacity of the Arabic language to support the world of science. They were concerned, however, about the need to update methods of learning the language as discussed earlier in this chapter, an area of reflection in the upcoming sections in this chapter.

The next two subsections provide an analysis of the emergent themes, that were left unproblematic by the ALI and were seen as problems only by the interviewees. The cited interview texts below do not necessarily disagree with the ALI text, but it provides different problematizations: (1) teacher preparation and qualifications and (2) regulation and/or policy implementation.

5.2.5. Teacher Education and Qualifications

The education of teachers of the Arabic language was perceived as a problem in most of the interview texts. The text put the responsibility on the authorities in this area. The selected ALI texts did not address this issue, except very discretely within the text of ALI-2 for example, when it mentioned changing the teaching and learning of Arabic within a new vision (ALI-2). Even though, *Living Arabic* as an ALI, by the government inspection authority in Dubai (KHDA) did provide a platform for exchanging expertise between teachers of Arabic across Dubai (KHDA, 2019), the interviewees did not propose it in their text as an alternative solution. This ALI was only brought up in the discussion by a few of the interviewees. The interviewees' text was critical of the fact that there was nothing yet in place in the education system in the UAE, at the official level, to address the issue of Arabic teacher capacity, qualifications and preparation. Needless to say, the upcoming licensing regulation that was brought up in some interviews, was known to all as a prospective alternative, and quite a number of them did not express hopes that this would be the ultimate solution to the problem of teacher preparation.

The interviewee text reflected a sense of urgency in describing the need for teacher preparation. Interviewee N15 explained, "...there is a need, there is a hole we need to fill in terms of Arabic teacher professional preparation..." (15-2-67). Interviewee N5 held the authorities to account, especially that they need to see results, that they needed to act fast when she urged, "...it's about policy makers must have bold decisions to shock the system...to make sure that teachers who are

teaching the Arabic language are qualified enough,” (5-1-28). Also, interview N5 expressed, “... I don’t know to what extent it’s working. The licensing is at a very slow pace I must say...” (5-6-15). Interviewee N24 reflected the criticality of the situation, “...teacher training has been, I wouldn’t say neglected, but it really needs to be looked at in alignment with the other initiatives and vision,” (24-3-4). This is a clear indication of the effect of the licensing discourse on the experiences of educators.

Parts of the interviewee texts had subjectification effects, through positioning the responsibility for teacher preparation. Two of these texts produced the subjects in opposition with each other (Goodwin, 2009). Interviewee N12 pinpointed that the problem lies paradoxically in the entity that is trying to solve the original problem. He explained, “...I’m aware of the teacher licensing process here, and I know, probably, a bit more details than most people would and I’m not very optimistic about whether or not it would succeed...” (12-5-29), and he goes on to stress that, “people who set these up are the same ones who have created the problems in schools now...and the people who would be evaluating participants’ classroom practice which is a part of the certificate,” (12-5-29). This text is also significant in its identification of the root causes of the issue and brings in a classic example of a policy that inherently creates the problem rather than solves it (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016b).

On the other hand, interviewee N29 suggested that the responsibility lies on the receiving end of the system, “where you monitor that policy and implementation of that policy...there needs to be a stronger take, there needs to be more serious accountability level that is put at different levels of the strategy, at school level, at teacher level,” (29-6-60). In another instance, he was more explicit, “Then the responsibility I think lies heavier on academics, on people working in education, to take the responsibility of a better and stronger approach to the teaching and the learning of Arabic,” (29-2-65).

There are more sides to this same narrative. Interviewee N9 talked about the challenge that even if the licensing regulation is put into effect it will not fully filter incompetent teaching out of the system. Interviewee N9 explained, “There is an added problem here, that 3/4 of our Arabic teachers in private schools, and to a certain extent, public schools, we are importing, even here in the UAE, you do something about teacher preparation, pre-service training in the universities, but 70% of your teachers are coming from Egypt and Jordan and even from Lebanon,” (9-4-37). Interviewee N17 reflected a similar line of thinking when she explained,

“We haven’t put enough effort yet and we have to start focusing on teaching Arabic strategies, raising the understanding of Arabic language acquisition not just English language acquisition,” (17-6-18). Additionally, Interviewee N18 was consistent in highlighting the gap that teachers may be experts in the subject of Arabic linguistics, but not necessarily in the pedagogy of the language,” (18-1-40). These texts clearly reflect a complex matrix in the discourse of teacher preparation.

5.2.6. Regulation and/or Policy Implementation

Aside from the problematizations already discussed, there were other ideas that emerged from the interviews that I found significant. Interviewees were critical of the government regulated time allocation on one hand. They also expressed concern about how the curriculum was approached when they had to support the Arabic reading challenge in the classroom. When these ideas were further unpacked during the conversations, interviewees concluded that the way decisions are executed at the learner’s level is actually a root cause of the deficiencies in the Arabic language.

For example, Interviewee N1 explained, “The curriculum is forcing the schools to assign more lessons...We have high expectations, we have less lessons per week. What concerns me is that this is circulated by the government itself,” (1-4-34). Interviewee N7 emphasized that the curriculum that is set by the government has high expectations, while the time allocation is too limited for the Arabic subject, where teachers cannot support learners to meet the expectations (7-1-37). In terms of implementation of some curriculum areas and the execution of the Arabic reading challenge, Interviewee N29 explained, “people have feelings for their own language. They do support it, they love it, it’s a cultural element...it’s rooted in their own lives. But that feeling is not often translated in the right action to be taken,” (29-6-42). Interviewee N17 explained, “...many of the reading initiatives were actually donate a book, don’t read it. It was really interesting during that year because there was a lot of donations, but the number of reading books was minimal,” (17-2-62).

When probing for further solutions, the interviewees suggested a range of proposals that touched on qualifications of teachers, professional training and licensing efforts in the UAE, teaching and learning issues, and the Arabic language resources and curriculum. At strategic policy levels, interviewees highlighted issues of responsibility and accountability in policy making, but they were unable to

systematically provide the solution, except that the system needs thoughtful analysis of the relevant factors (N7, N9, N29). Interviewee N9 chose to critique the responsibility for the quality of curriculum content. She found it ironic that curriculum designers are the ones who defend the integrity of the language the most, while they are responsible for creating the unattractive literature and content in the Arabic textbooks, that disengages the learners. A translation of her phrase reads, "...interestingly, the people who cause harm the most to the Arabic language are the ones who defend the language integrity the most," (9-3-35). As discussed earlier, this is another example of putting the responsibility for the solution on the system itself that created the original problem.

The interviewees' text featured emerging views about responsibility and accountability in policy making. The responsibility was bounced back and forth between middle management level and authority level, as illustrated in the cited text of N1 and N29. The issues of responsibility and accountability for policy are additional opportunities for providing alternatives to the existing gaps.

The interviewees' text reflected highly critical views, based on their experiences. However, they were calling for the need for research to assess the status of the language and plan the needed action. Interviewee N8 expressed, "one of the biggest problems as to why we are where we are now, is that, I don't think we have enough evidence and data upon which a good and strong analysis can be built to guide decision making on this particular aspect," (8-1-22). With a contradictory text, interviewee N29 thought that, "this is not the politicians' level of intervention. It is the educators' and education system level of intervention that is needed really to be strengthened according to my own views. This is an example of how the status should be perceived from a distance, and should really be researched," (29-3-4). The discursive effect of this text again subjectifies the educators and places the responsibility of researching the policy on their end of the game.

5.2.7 Conclusions of the WPR Analysis

In conclusion, the WPR analysis of the interview texts uncovered further ideas, narratives and problem-questioning stances, which reflect the way ALI was perceived by learners and educators. The analysed text opened the window for questioning the implications of ALI on the regulations of curriculum and teaching

pedagogy. The reasoning in this analysis was deductive, reflecting on the conceptual WPR questioning framework in analysing both types of texts.

The interview texts were consistent with the ALI texts in problematizing the challenges in the teaching of Arabic, the prevalence of the English language, and the concern about Arab patriotism. The analysis highlighted additional problematizations in the interviewees' texts which were teacher education and policy/regulation implementation (Figure -2). The interviewees were discursively consistent in the levels of criticality, even though interviewees were comparatively emphasizing variable aspects of the challenges facing the Arabic language. The interviewees' text uncovered different *subjectification* in terms of accountability towards the translation of ALI into practice. The analysis highlighted how the relevant authorities were produced as *subjects* in opposition to another group of subjects who are practitioners in schools, reflecting how power relations are played against one another. The discourse analysis further highlighted the causes of some of the challenges in teaching, attributing it to the quality of curriculum and teacher preparation. Finally, the analysis highlighted patriotism in the Arabic language, and its potential of supporting the aspirations of the UAE, as an alternative representation of the situation of the Arabic.

The next section of the critical discourse analysis (CDA) explores the degrees of legitimacy and 'truthfulness' of the ideas brought forward through the WPR discursive analysis. It also attempts to explore the power relations and identify interests in this political government discourse, so as to unpack the underpinnings of the challenges in the Arabic language as we know them. Eventually this analysis aims to reframe the discourse and pave the way for future policy steps.

5.3 Discourse-Historical Analysis of ALI Texts (DHA)

In this sub-section, I will conduct a discourse-historical analysis (DHA) of the ALI texts that were sampled in the previous section. I expanded my selection of ALI texts to include most of the texts under investigation that have published statements of purpose (Appendix F). This analysis does not include the interviewee texts, because of the nature of this extensive exercise and the limitations of space in this research inquiry report. The outcomes of this analysis will be eventually brought

together in the concluding chapter with the views of the interviews as summarized in the previous sections.

This part of the analysis follows abductive reasoning, going back and forth between the texts and the theoretical body of knowledge related to the Arabic language. The theories that will be referred to are middle range, namely those that were featured in the literature review and the first chapter about neoliberalism and **language imperialism**, as well as theoretical issues related to the Arabic language and the historical development of the language policies in the region and the UAE. This exercise will support the understanding of the impact of ALI and the research questions about implications for curriculum and pedagogy. The discourses that I will highlight may be the ones of impact on the future of the Arabic language and will pave the way for thinking about future language policy directions, that this research will contribute with.

As discussed in Chapter 3, the previous WPR analysis focused on inferred *problematizations* of the Arabic language from the ALI and interviewee text. For this analytical exercise, I present the knowledge available in the sample texts about historical sources and background of the context in which the discursive events are embedded (Wodak, 2011). Then I identify the genres, topics and discourses that I thought were significant in the selected ALI documents (Appendix F). I used discursive devices, particularly perspectivation, argumentation, and where applicable, intensification/mitigation (Wodak, 2011).

The ALI texts fall under the field of political control (Wodak, 2011). A few of them fall under political procedures and contributions (Figure -3-). The main overarching discourse is that of sustaining and promoting the Arabic language. All other discourse topics fit under it as seen in Figure 4.

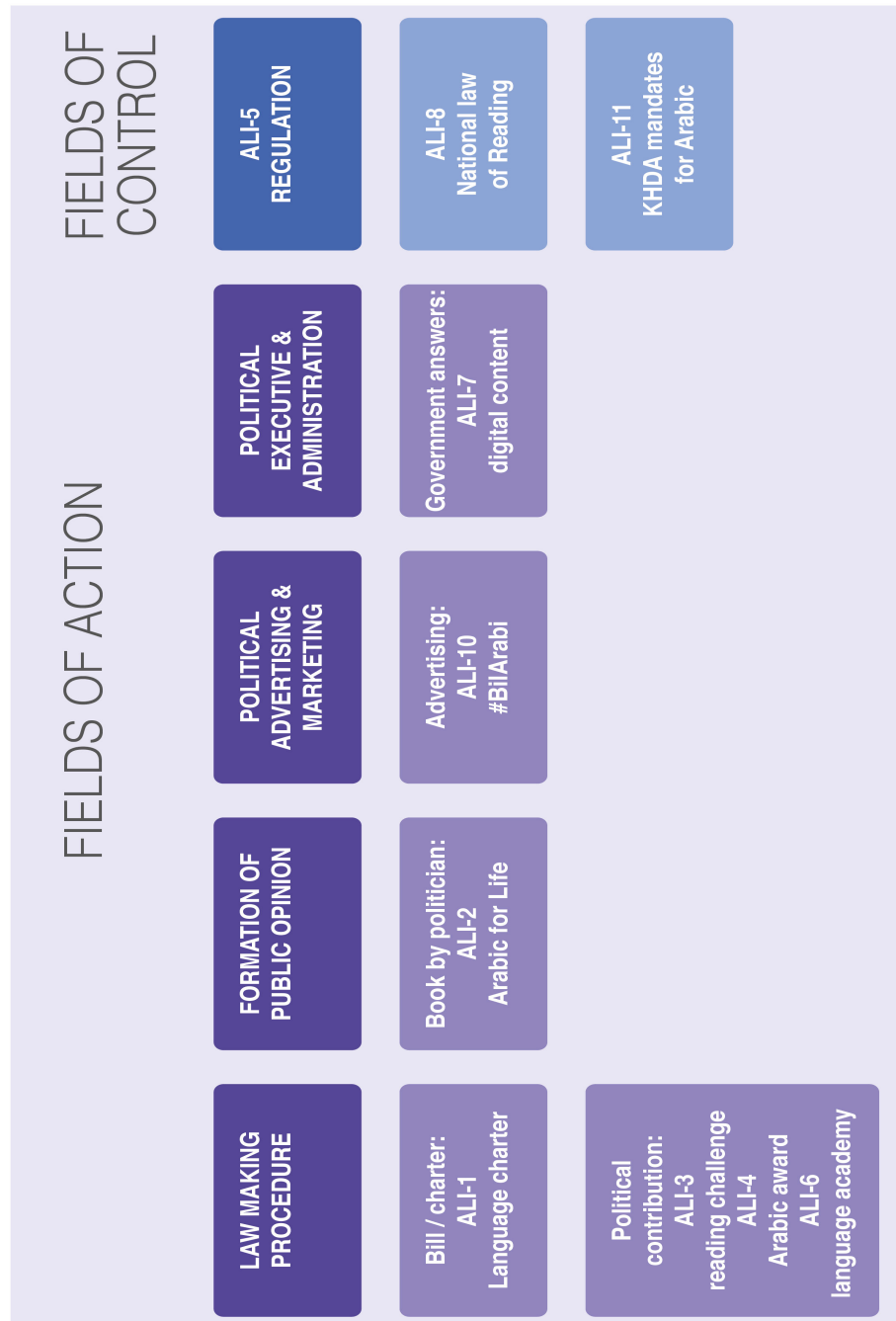


Figure -3- Fields of Action & Control of ALI (Wodak, 2011)

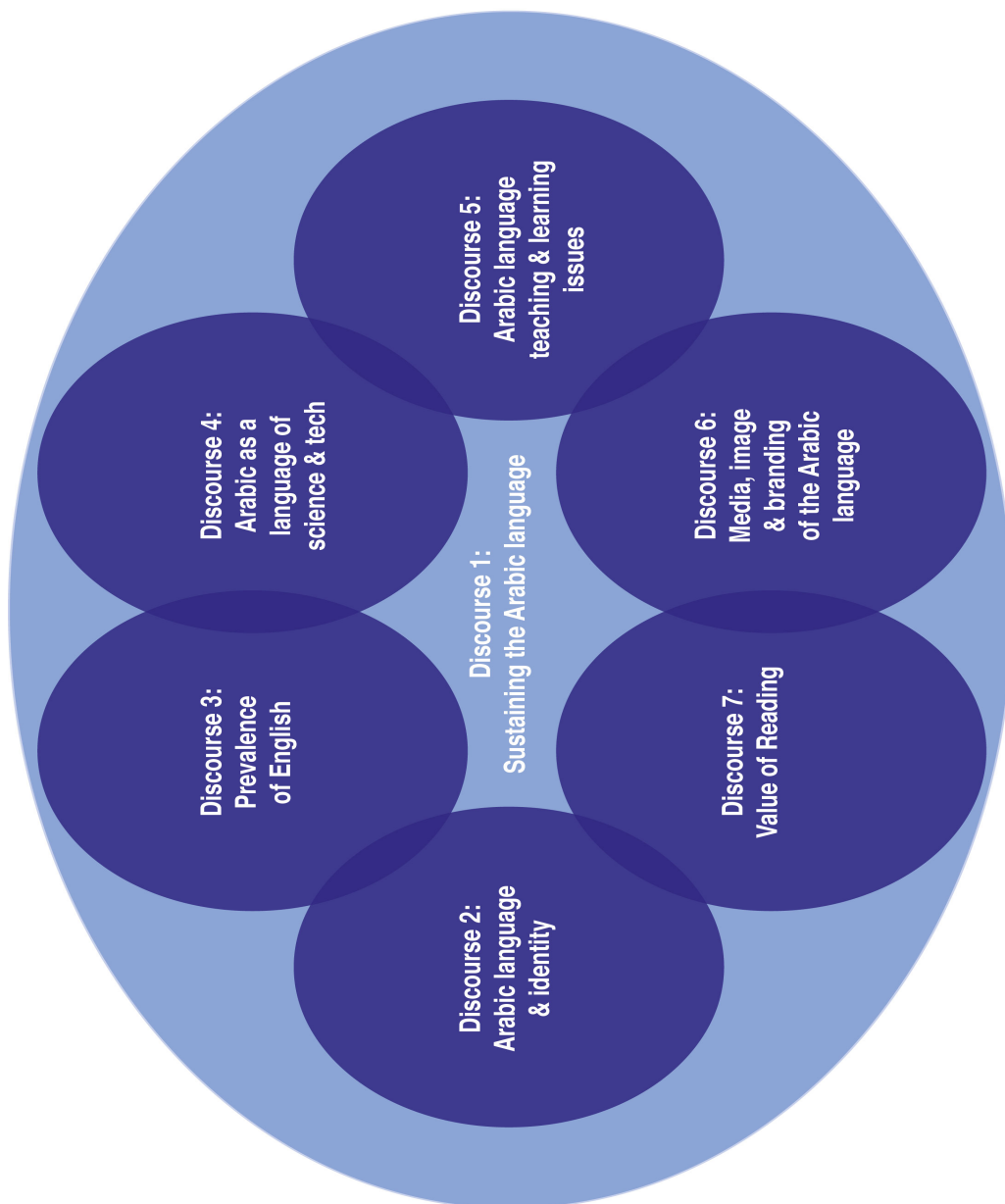


Figure -4- Discourse Topics (Wodak, 2011)

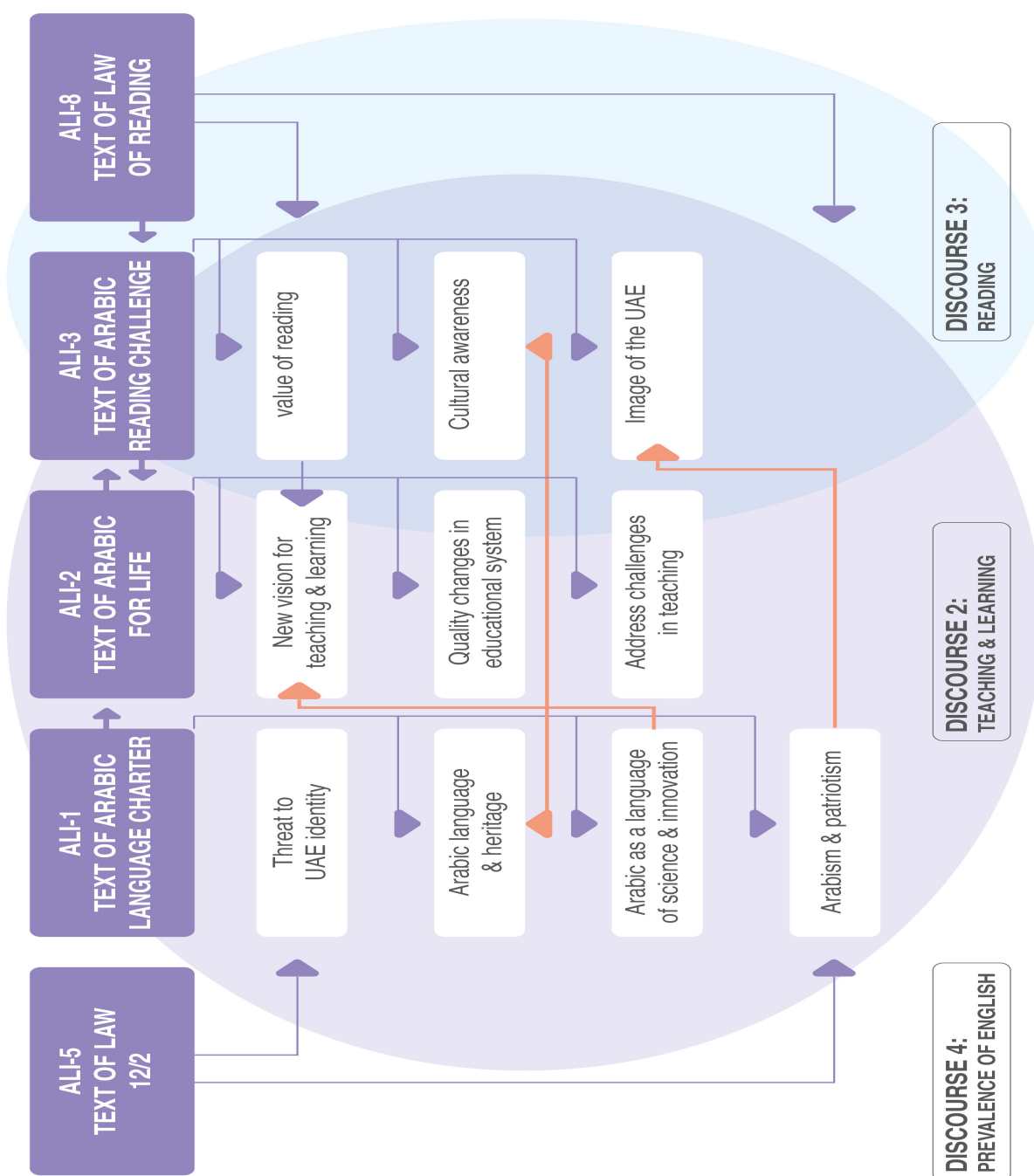


Figure -5-

Interdiscursive and Intertextual Relationships (1) (Wodak, 2011)

I begin by unpacking the contextual knowledge I have developed about the above texts and their discourses, and their intertextual and interdiscursive links. Then I unpack the three discourses with the topics, genres, and relevant texts, to which I apply the questions provided previously to conduct the analysis.

The overarching discourse about promoting and enhancing the Arabic language is the Arabic Language Charter (Emirates 24/7, 2012) (See also Appendix I for original text). The main text of ALI-1 encompasses the discourse of identity and patriotism. Needless to say, the identity and patriotism discourse is reflected across a number of similar ALI texts that are not captured in Figure 5.

Most of its topics have discursive links to other texts that were issued thereafter as illustrated in Figure 5. Contextually, the discourse about reading has emerged with the issuance of ALI-8 (uaecabinet.ae, 2016b), and the subsequent announcement of the year 2016 as the Year of Reading. The text of ALI-3 had been in place a few years earlier. The law apparently was developed and set after the success of ALI-3 (Arab Reading Challenge, 2019), and the development of the UAE vision and priorities for building a knowledge economy.

Concepts such as promoting the value of reading and cultural awareness belong in the discourse about reading. There is a clear intertextual relation between the text of ALI-8 and ALI-3, as shown with the horizontal arrows. The topic about the image of the UAE is explicitly stated in the text of ALI-3, which makes it also link to the discourse about media and re-branding that is running in parallel with the other discourses. The image of the UAE as a topic in this discourse was substantiated in a visible action. The Arab reading challenge is now the content of a weekly TV show that is broadcast by a major TV network in the region, featuring the contestants competing in reality-show style, to promote the reading challenge more widely and engage the public in a culture of reading.

Along the same lines, the teaching and learning discourse is reflected in the text of ALI-2. This text is focused on the improvement of teaching and learning of Arabic. It also has an explicit aim of improving the image of Arabic in the UAE through the improvement of translation and media, as stated in its statement of purpose. This is interdiscursively linked with the text of ALI-8 about reading where the image of the UAE is a main focus, where it says, "...establish the UAE's image as an inspirational model in the region," (ALI-8). The text of ALI-2 expresses keen intentions on making quality changes in the teaching of Arabic and address current challenges in the areas of pedagogy and learning of Arabic. These announced intentions overlap with the topics of the discourse on reading. There may be intertextual overlaps with the discourse on Arabic as a language of science and for the future that I will delve into shortly.

The analysis now proceeds with the questioning I set out in the Chapter 3, employing links back and forth with some of the theories touched on in the literature review, or relevant contextual information. As I run through this exercise, I analyze the salient issues that I find in the text, that will eventually support the main research questions about perceptions of the ALI texts. The point of interest around the four discourses presented in Figure 5 are embedded in how Arabic is perceived in the cited texts. My comments will cover the utterances used in the text that are relevant to intensifying and/or mitigating the messages, intentionally by the creators of the texts. I will run through all the ALI texts in sequence but will now begin with the ones in Figure 5.

First, the perspectives reflected through the text of ALI 1 describe the Arabic language as a determinant of the Emirati national identity in this text,

“The Arabic language is one of the most important elements of the Islamic Arab identity of the United Arab Emirates and an integral pillar of our national identity, and an expression of our rich legacy and history, and in line with our national policy to promote and nurture the Arabic language and celebrate it as a language of a civilization and communication, and for encouraging all innovations in making it the language of creativity in science and technology...” (my translation from Arabic caption below- ALI 1 Appendix I)

لما كانت اللغة العربية من أهم عناصر الهوية الإسلامية العربية لدولة الإمارات واللبنة الأساسية لصرح هويتنا الوطنية وتعبيراً عن حضارتنا الغنية وتاريخنا العريق وتراثنا الأصيل، والتزاماً بالسياسة الثابتة التي تنتهجها دولة الإمارات لدعم ورعاية العربية والاحتفاء بها لغة للحضارة والتواصل، وتشجيع إغنائها بكل ما هو جديد لتصبح لغة الإبداع في المجالات العلمية والتقنية...” (ميثاق اللغة العربية)

Similarly, ALI-2 text considers, “Arabic language as a main tool for enforcing the national identity for the future generations,” (ALI-2). The text ascribes significance and reflects power in “patriotism” as an ideological stance. The connotations of power in the return to the local in response to globalization are justified in non-English speaking nations. These perspectives come from what Canagarajah (2005) calls, “resurgence of localism” in the pursuit of Arabic, in response to the prevalence of English, and also echo views from Spolsky (2019) and Tsui and Tollefson (2017) on English imperialism. This category of interpretation is appearing in the other texts of ALI 1, 2 & 3 under similar representations. The discursive effect of patriotism and/or nationalism as a justification for the support of

the Arabic language, like other similar ideologies, can attract the people initially, but falls short of convincing them of the need to support their national language for the long term.

Second, the perspectives of the authorities and experts who produced the ALI-2 text focus on a new stance for the teaching and learning of Arabic. The introductory statements of the text of ALI-2 feature the following statement:

"بني هذا التقرير على أسس أهمها الأصالة التي تدفع للتحديث والتطوير، والتمسك بالتفأول والمقاربة العملية والبعد عن التنظير قدر ما أمكن، مع أخذ التحديات التي تواجه تعليم اللغة العربية في الاعتبار.

"This report was built on the principles and assumptions of a rich legacy and originality that drives change and renewal of the Arabic language, with an optimistic and pragmatic outlook while staying away from theorizing as much as possible, taking into consideration the challenges of teaching the Arabic language," (my translation) (ALI-2).

They used terms such "pragmatic" and the phrase "staying away from theorizing" is an intensified utterance and an indication of rejection of the status quo of teaching practices. The text of ALI-2 uses the term 'originality' in a heritage sense (translated ALI-2) with a reference to going back to basics, as a way to suggest quality changes in practices of teaching. The text uses the term "upholding optimism", which is ambiguous and raises questions about the way authorities and the committee that produced this report perceive Arabic. If taken in an interpretive sense, it may suggest that what is in place now in terms of teaching practices is not convincingly useful.

Given the previous discussions of context, this justifies why authorities want to resist pessimistic discourse about Arabic by taking the optimistic stance. The use of the utterance "optimism" may be linked to what they called "quality changes" and keen and strong political will. However, the fact that interviewees explained about the way this document of ALI-2 failed to make it to the middle level authorities, and hence was not filtering through to the realities of learners raises questions about the effectiveness of this initiative. As a discourse, what is in place in ALI-3 as a guideline is powerful enough; it remains a vision on a blue print waiting to be realized.

Thirdly, the perspectives on Arabic identified in the text of ALI-3 focus on promoting reading. This text followed by the national reading law (ALI-8) tell us that there is something that has to be done about reading. The move towards a reading culture, through the reading challenge and the law of reading is well visible and

intensified through the local and regional media. Looking at the texts, there are salient points of significant political marketing and re-branding of the Arabic language, when it says, “The Arab Reading Challenge (ARC) is the largest-ever Arab literacy initiative,” (ALI-3). The notion of rebranding the language and improving its image is part of *policy planning* component, namely *image planning* (Liddicoat, 2013). Additionally, the perspective seen of reading and subsequently of valuing the Arabic language through reading is noteworthy. The text of ALI-3 in its statement of purpose highlights the following, “Raise awareness of the importance of reading among students and youth in the Arab World; Improve Arabic language skills, including fluency and eloquence in Arabic speech,” (ALI-3). It is discursively valid and convincing to value reading for obvious reasons. However, the significance lies in an exercise of power when this is coming from a political authority in the format of a national law of reading. The ALI-3 appeared first on the timeline of events. When it proved to be a successful and disseminated widely over the past years, the law came into place to institutionalize the discourse of reading. A culture of reading is growing, as confirmed through the educators and school practitioners interviewed.

ALI-8 now belongs to a field of political control, as a law of reading, after belonging previously to a field of action, as a reading challenge (Wodak, 2011). The text discursively reflects these changing fields of power and control. The ALI-3 text reads, “Raise awareness of the importance of reading among students and youth in the Arab world...improve Arabic language skills, including fluency and eloquence...,” (ALI-3). The statement reflected in Article 2 of the ALI-8 text,

”ترسيخ ثقافة وسلوك القراءة لدى كافة أفراد المجتمع وتهيئة سبل التعلم مدى الحياة.

“Institutionalise a culture of reading across all society levels and prepare the tools for life-long learning,” (my translation, ALI-8).

The text also enforcing accountability at all institutional levels, when it assigns specific articles for different economic sectors and how they will build a culture of reading. A statement in Article 7 is binding,

”إلزام كافة المنشآت التعليمية بتوفير مكتبات تتناسب مع الاحتياجات التعليمية واهتمامات كافة الطلبة المنتسبين

لها.”

“All educational institutions must provide libraries that meet the needs and interests of all their students,” (my translation- ALI-8). The press release of ALI-8 text highlights a focus on “establishing intellectual Emirati legacy,” and “enable the

country to occupy a prominent position among the economies of knowledge-based countries,” again is an affirmation of the country’s interest in projecting the image of a leading knowledge-economy. The intensification of the utterances is of relevance when the text of ALI-8 uses more affirmative terms than the text of ALI-3, reflecting different genre levels, the former is of action and the latter is of control and power. The differences in the discursivity levels of both texts marks a development in the discourse of reading.

Last, the prevalence of English is a discourse that is seen implicitly across most of the texts, and explicitly through the text of the law of 12/2 (ALI-5). The press release of ALI-5 explains,

"جاء هذا الإجراء لينهي حالة من الجدل أثارها استخدام اللغة الإنكليزية في عدد كبير من الوزارات والمؤسسات الحكومية العاملة بالإمارات إذ يواجه المتعاملون فيها خاصة العرب منهم صعوبة فهم المراسلات التي يتلقونها في أعمالهم..."

“This regulation came as a response to put an end to the controversy caused by the use of the English language in a large number of the ministries and government institutions in the UAE...,” (my translation, ALI-5).

The keen intention to promote Arabic is partially a direct response to the prevalence of English, or English imperialism as described in works by (Spolsky, 2019; Tollefson & Tsui, 2017). The understanding of the issues inherent in the prevalence of English can be understood through the lens of neoliberalism and its impact in the Gulf Cooperation Council countries, that are seen to be growing their private sector education markets, however at the expense of strengthening the teaching and learning of Arabic (Barnawi, 2018).

Looking through the perspectifications of Arabic in both texts of ALI-3 and ALI-8, both texts identify issues in the Arabic language, make links with the cultural legacy and identity of the UAE, and make use of power in enforcing the UAE’s determination to lead changes in this area. The arguments put forward in the text with links to the knowledge-economy are discursively valid. Neoliberalism is at play in this particular context where the UAE is determined to lead the way in institutionalizing reading through a national law. The discourse around reading has the potential of growing and projecting further impact and is actually a smart way to approach the promotion of the Arabic language. Going back to the context, as this study is being produced, there are systems in place that require government

institutions to report regularly on how they are executing the reading law, especially in private sector schools in Dubai, known to me by virtue of my professional position.

Moving on with the analysis using more of the discourses identified across ALI texts, I will repeat the same exercise while highlighting the discourse of Arabic as a language of the future and of science and the discourse of media, image and branding (Figure 6). The texts highlighted in Figure 6 belong to genres of political action and politician contribution. Their effects may not be as binding as the effect of a law or regulation. They focus on the core of promoting the Arabic language from cultural, political and economic perspectives, reflecting the notion of *image planning* (Liddicoat, 2013). The discourse of media, image and branding is the overarching discourse that is seen across the three cited texts of the Arabic award, digital content, and the Arabic Language Academy of Sharjah. The discourse of Arabic as a language of science is mainly seen in the Arabic award text and implicitly through encouraging innovation in the other two texts.

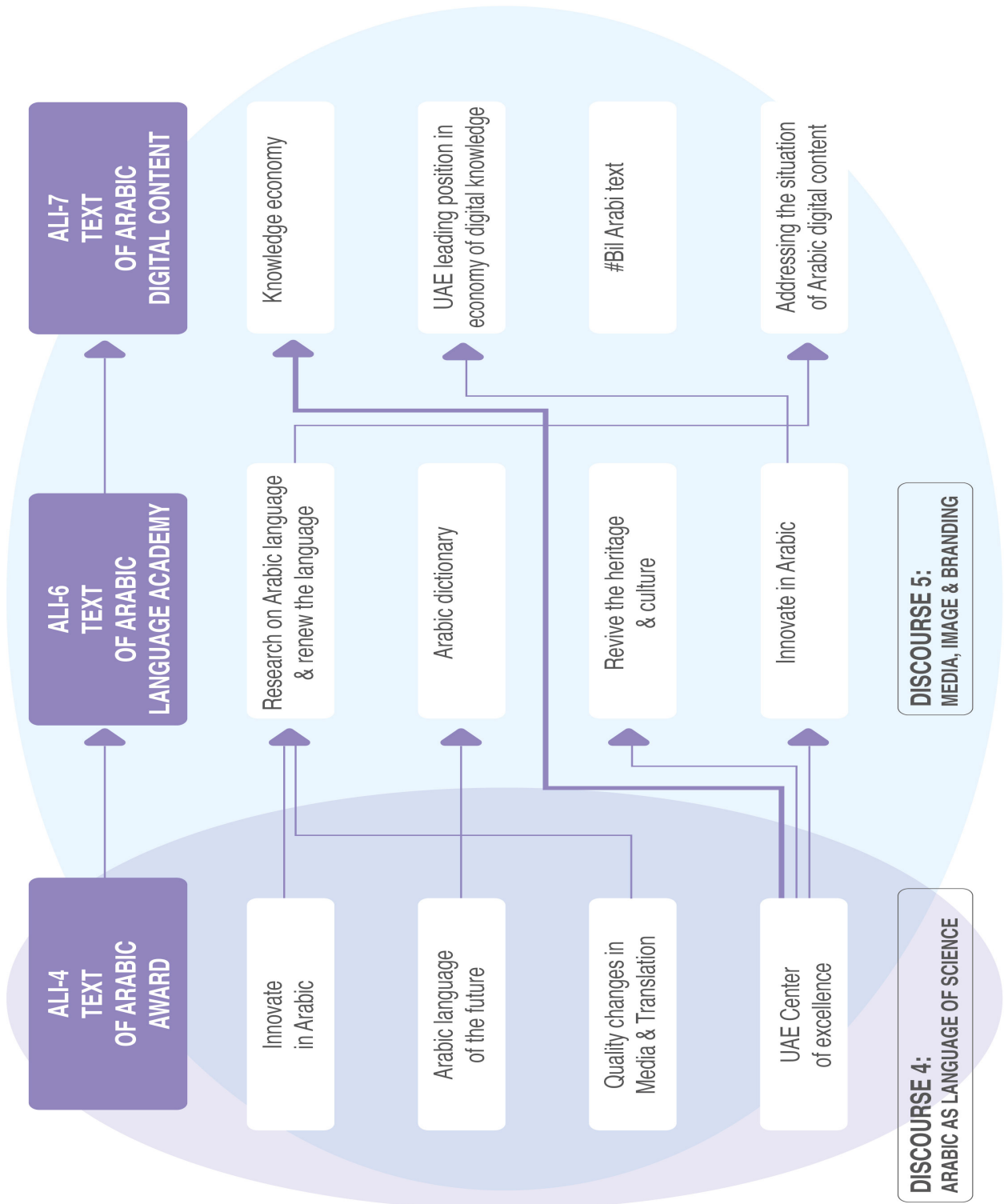


Figure -6-

Interdiscursive and Intertextual Relationships (2) (Wodak, 2011)

The perspectives about Arabic are expressed through ALI-6, ALI-7, ALI-4 (Appendix F). Arabic is seen as an opportunity for innovation where institutions and

the community are invited to take responsibility for this innovative practice as iterated in the text, “encourage young people and motivate them to innovate in the various uses of the Arabic language,” (ALI-4). The term ‘various uses’ is used intentionally to confirm that Arabic is not only the language of literature, but also can be used pragmatically paving the way for the next phrase of emphasis, “raise awareness that Arabic is the language of the future and work to crystallize this role and goal in reality,” (ALI-4). The key messages in this text attempt to create a new reality for the Arabic language, a reality that has not been used in other contexts beyond the discourse in the UAE. This perspective of Arabic links to previous ideas and narratives about “optimism” and “innovation” in the Arabic language in ALI-2. This discourse is establishing a form of “truthfulness” for Arabic (Bacchi and Goodwin 2016).

Linking this discourse to recent discussions in the literature review, the discourse around Arabic has been about the ineffectiveness of Arabic to promote and support the language of science and technology. This text of ALI-4 marks a change in the discourse and is attempting to create a new perception for the Arabic language, or a new truth (Bacchi & Goodwin, 2016). This discursive attempt does not provide a convincing argument from a teaching and learning point of view, simply because the realities of the education system pose challenges for the pragmatic use of Arabic as a language of instruction. As discussed in the literature review, currently the UAE private school system does not adopt Arabic as a language of instruction except in the minority public school system. The language of instruction is in Arabic across K-12 in public schools, then it shifts to become in English in higher education, and the private sector does not use Arabic as a language of instruction. This discursive attempt to project Arabic as a language of innovation, for science and for the future remains in the realm of wishful thinking. However, if it is coupled with wise and comprehensive policy planning to update the language dictionaries and structures, it can expand beyond the boundaries of this political discourse and become a reality.

The other perspective of Arabic seen through the ALI-7 acknowledges that Arabic digital content is a significant tool for disseminating a wider use of the Arabic language and supporting the knowledge economy. The text in the press release reads,

“The Telecommunication Regulatory Authority announced launching the process to issue the first comprehensive report that addresses the situation and the prospects of the Arabic Digital Content...The report address the current situation of the Arabic Digital Content, the relevant opportunities and challenges, the global trends in the development of digital content, the needed priorities, as well as indicators to measure the level of development in supporting the Arabic Digital Content,” (ALI-7)

Along the same lines, ALI-6 has a key purpose of, “active engagement in preparing and producing programs that integrate the Arabic language in contemporary search technologies, and benefit from the info boom to support the Arabic language...” (ALI-6). Enriching Arabic content is a valid pursuit and it aligns with the need to promote the Arabic language more effectively. This being said, the economic investment in Arabic digital content is significant, and requires long term commitment. The sustainability of this endeavor requires joint efforts of Arab countries, and other regional and global organizations. The efforts of the UAE reflect deep commitment and genuine political will, that is at risk of being trapped within the limitations of promoting a media, image and branding discourse around Arabic, pending thoughtful long-term planning as suggest by (Liddicoat, 2013) .

The media, image and branding discourse can be traced with the efforts of policymakers to make the ALI more pronounced in the media, and widely known in the region and internationally. The text of the Arabic digital content identifies an aim to, “enhance the position of the UAE as a capital of content,” (ALI-7). This interest in drawing attention to the UAE’s achievements can also be traced in ALI-2 and ALI-4, both of which emphasize that the role of the UAE as a “Centre for excellence in the Arabic language,” (ALI-2 & ALI-4). The way the text is crafted in the media releases about some of the ALI signifies these efforts to project an image of the UAE that makes it stand out, such as, “In an unprecedented, civilized and legislative gesture for the region...,” knowing that media releases are government endorsed content. Similarly, ALI-7 press report about the Arabic content uses utterances like “UAE’s leading position in the community” and “important UAE initiatives in the field of supporting Arabic content” to intensify the message and project power through media. The recent broadcasted TV show about the Arabic reading challenge (ALIE-3) is evidence of the efforts of the authorities to use the media space for the branding and marketing of this particular initiative in parallel with developing the culture of reading. This is an example of a powerful interplay between the media, politics and

people, put forth through written and visual discourses, that have the potential of growing if developed at a middle leadership level and disseminated more widely beyond a limited voluntary engagement of some young learners in reading.

5.3.1 Conclusions of the Discourse-Historical Analysis (DHA)

The discourse-historical analysis (DHA) signified various perspectives about the issues facing the Arabic language. The perspectives about the Arabic language through seven discourse topics identified in this analysis have featured variable discursive effects. Some of the discourses were convincing, grounded and valid in their perspectives and arguments, especially the *teaching and learning*, *digital content*, and *reading* discourses. Other discourses have the potential of being developed and built upon in the future such as the *Arabic as a language of the future and of science* and *prevalence of English*, only when coupled with thoughtful and long-term actions and financial investments.

5.4 Summary of Chapter 5

To conclude this discourse analysis, the WPR analysis and the DHA featured a number of problematizations of the Arabic language from the perspectives of both the interviewees and the actual ALI texts. The DHA highlighted another layer of narratives of power, identity and the role of media as key factors in discourses of the Arabic language in the UAE.

Both stages of discourse analysis culminated in a more established view of the current situation of the Arabic language. The analysis at both levels helped me uncover the discursive issues that impact educators and learners. With evidence from interviewees, confirmed further through the discursive devices in the texts of ALI, I can establish that there are key challenges in the situation with the Arabic language not only at the educational level but also at policy level. The challenges are related to: (1) teaching and learning, (2) teacher preparation and (3) needs for linguistic and syntactical updates to revive the language and make it more present and accessible to learners.

I argued that the ALI are indeed creating a new reality for the Arabic language through *reading* initiatives and portraying Arabic as the language of innovation,

science and the future, in alignment with the priorities of the UAE and its vision. The discourse of *reading* emerged strongly in the discussions with interviewees and seems to be dominating the ALI texts. These two discourses, about *reading* and about *the linguistic and syntactical updates* of Arabic, have the power of developing if they were coupled with the favorable political and executive level conditions as noted earlier.

At a more pragmatic level, this analysis indicated that there is potential to improve access and use of the Arabic language through developing innovative strategies and tools. At the moment, these tools include developed policy planning work around teaching and learning and simultaneous enrichment of digital content. The discourse of reading is already ahead at policy level.

This analysis additionally uncovered underpinnings of the policy infrastructure around the Arabic language as it currently stands. By this I mean that there is some impact that is starting to take shape in the UAE but needs more comprehensive and bold policy decisions that have to be well planned and implemented at middle leadership level to impact areas of curriculum, teaching and learning. The key determinant of the growth of a new perception of the Arabic language and its revival as a dynamic pragmatic language is highly dependent on political will, thoughtful planning and execution which exists as confirmed by the interviewees. The final chapter will detail this discussion, implications and next steps for research in this area.

CHAPTER 6

DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

6.1 Introduction of Chapter 6

In this chapter, I summarize the principal findings of the research inquiry. I then discuss the major contributions of the research to the wider knowledge in the field of Arabic language policy. After that, I consider the implications of the findings for the development of future policies on curriculum and pedagogy of the Arabic language. I move on to discuss limitations of the research. Towards the end of the chapter, I present recommendations for possible future research in the area of Arabic language policy emerging from the analyses of the Arabic Language Initiatives (ALI). Finally, I conclude the chapter with personal reflections on this whole research process.

6.2 Summary of the Major Findings

This research inquiry investigated the key features of the Arabic language initiatives (ALI) and their perceived problematizations. The findings reflected that the issues of the Arabic language were problematized in the ALI text and by the interviewees broadly similarly. There were different perspectives in approaching these problematizations in terms of the solutions offered through the ALI to address this language situation. The findings established that the political support of ALI is initiated by strong political will and commitment, as well as acknowledgement by the decision-makers that the Arabic language is in a critical situation.

The interviewees perceived some problems with ALI and illustrated the challenges through providing some examples of the wider context of Arabic in the Arab countries, and what has or has not worked, which iterated to a certain extent the findings of the study of the Arab Thought Foundation (2012). The findings suggested alternative solutions, or how the *problematization* of Arabic could be conceptualized differently, which partially agreed with proposals of Fehri (2013), Troudi and Al Hafidh, (2017) and Taha-Thomure (2019). These included qualifications of teachers, professional training and licensing efforts in the UAE,

teaching and learning issues, and the Arabic language resources and curriculum. At strategic policy levels, interviewees talked about issues of responsibility and accountability in policy making and put forward regulation proposals. Finally, the findings concluded with themes about the use of Arabic in the public space and bilingualism as a proposed language policy model for the UAE, as proposed in the policy brief by Zakzak (2017).

6.3 Contribution to the Field of Knowledge

The discussion below develops gradually from methodological contributions to practical contributions and ends with conceptual contributions.

6.3.1 Methodological Contributions

The findings from interviews concluded that the ALI were launched in the context of challenged first language learners L1 in their usage of the Arabic language. Outcomes of students were not yet satisfactory as confirmed by interviewees and supported in the results of international benchmarking assessment in PIRLS (PIRLS, 2012, 2016) featured in the literature. The texts of ALI further discursively acknowledged that learners are challenged in learning and using the Arabic language, particularly in its standard form (MSA). A review of the most significant findings of the WPR analysis of the interview texts showed how the interviewees showed concern about the Arabic language teaching pedagogy and stressed the scarcity of resources and ineffectiveness of curricular content.

In terms of the impact of ALI, the findings from interviews concluded that some of the ALI, specifically the Arabic reading challenge, had impact on learners and educators, and the general public. A discourse of reading is emerging in the UAE, paving the way for potentially improved practices at the level of education. Additionally, the critical discourse analysis uncovered renewed perception of the Arabic language, that has the potential of growing and projecting further impact on teaching and learning policies, if given the right steer at the level of policy. Finally, a number of the ALI contributed to raising the profile of the Arabic language in the UAE, at educational, social and cultural levels, through the media to a certain extent.

At the other end of the spectrum, the findings at a methodological level showed that currently, there is total absence of an explicit philosophical linguistic and pedagogical approach to inform Arabic pedagogies. The lack of such explicit policy direction resulted in a confused and inconsistent set of practices that are used across the system in its public and private sectors.

Additionally, there is total absence of language education policy that can inform the direction for language of instruction at K-12 levels and subsequently higher education levels. Interviewees critiqued the decisions to teach in Arabic in K-12 and then move to English in higher education to strengthen the English language skills, in agreement with views of Karamani (2005), Issa & Dahan (2001) and Troudi & Al Hafidh (2017). Interviewees were critical of what they perceived as an inconsistent approach to language education policy choice, which is inclined towards consolidating English language skills, and at the same time committed to bringing students back to their roots through attempting to sustain and promote the Arabic language. In response to these concerns and based on the suggestions brought forth by some of the interviewees, I would argue that the bilingual model of language at the level of the UAE is at its earliest stages, which justifies the confused language policy choices that are inflicting on the current education system.

Along the same vein, the findings from interviews showed that there is absence of a government language policy that can clearly translate into daily practice in the public space. The critical discourse analysis concluded that the UAE prioritizes the Arabic language as a first language, and this has filtered through a number of regulations related to governmental communications, as explained in the policy brief by Zakzak (2017). Yet, the daily context, with the prevalence of English in the social and economic life of the UAE, and the realities of its vast private and international school sector reflects a diluted Arabic language identity in the public space as seen by Al Issa and Al Dahan (2011).

The key concern that both the interviewees and the authorities, through ALI, addressed is that the pedagogy of the Arabic language needs to be updated. This finding was captured clearly during the interviews and was discursively communicated in the texts of ALI. This narrative did not emerge as new. However, this consolidates that the government, through ALI texts, acknowledges the existing gaps and agrees with views of Taha-Thomure (2008) & (2019). This finding

facilitates the future proposals at a policy level to support the area of teacher preparation, and hence, improve the experiences of the learners of Arabic.

Finally, the critical discourse analyses, through the WPR and the DHA, showed how government level initiatives were mis-interpreted by practitioners, and did not filter effectively into the system. This only indicates that middle-management leadership is lacking in the whole process. A clear example of this issue is that the Arabic for Life document did not make it through to the levels of practitioners and was not considered in the recent curricular reviews, as confirmed by interviewees. Some ALI such as the Arabic reading challenge contributed significantly to raising the profile of the Arabic language in the UAE, as confirmed by all interviewees. The intentions of the UAE government to nurture a culture of reading and institutionalize the act of reading is starting to take shape and has promising potential.

6.3.2 Practical Contributions

In interpreting the presented conclusions, I will discuss a few critical ideas that can be developed and conceptualized into future pathways or next steps. These are: (1) the need for middle-level leadership to fill the identified gap at the stage that links the policy actors with practitioners on the ground and defines responsibility and/or accountability more clearly. (2) the need for policies that regulate the profession for the teaching of Arabic, apart from the prospective teacher licensing program that the government started to implement (3) the need for Arabic language and Arabic education policies that guide and strengthen how the Arabic language is used as a language in teaching vis-à-vis English on one hand, and a policy that governs and regulates the use of the Arabic language in public and virtual spaces and last, (4) building on the existing impact of ALI and its discourse implications to further develop the renewed perception of the Arabic language through ALI to improve the realities of teaching and learning of Arabic.

Starting with the first concept, the need for middle-level leadership to fill the identified gap at implementation levels of initiatives or policies. At the moment and as it stands, the responsibility for executing ALI's and policies in general is not clear based on findings of this research inquiry. It is evident from the interview data that the policy makers and individuals in authority that the responsibility falls on the individual institutions to take necessary action to execute the ALI. The interviewed

practitioners, on the other hand, believed that the opposite was true. This is a serious challenge that requires reconciliation at senior decision-making authorities. The approaches to address this type of gap fall beyond the boundaries of this research inquiry. However, I find it important to understand and acknowledge this gap because it obviously affects the implications of ALI.

Second, the data provided in this research inquiry signposted gaps at the level of Arabic language teacher preparation, in agreement with the views of Taha (2017). This idea has several ramifications. The data from this research confirmed that interviewees perceive this issue as a game changer for any initiative. The findings also recognized that the government of the UAE is advancing in this regard at the level of the teacher licensing program. However, it is the entire system for teacher pre-service education that requires careful review and attention to ensure that teachers of Arabic join the profession with rigorous levels of professional preparation, in the subject knowledge and in the pedagogical requirements as explained by (Taha-Thomure, 2019b; Taha, 2017). This means that the colleges of education operating in the UAE that do not prepare teachers of Arabic at a professional level require review and attention, and actually require a different renewed set of policies that can address this gap.

Following on the ramifications of this process, the findings showed that this area is a complex matrix of factors that are all linked together. The findings raised the issue that once teachers go through the licensing process, they may be filtered out as a result, and this is another challenge. Teachers' levels of know-how, knowledge, education, and expertise may not enable them to survive the challenging licensing process, and maybe exit the market. In this case, the interviewees explained that there may be scarcity of available experienced teachers for Arabic, if this process of filtration is executed rigorously. In parallel, very few student teachers opt to specialize in Arabic language teaching, which brings the issues of incentivisation of the whole profession, at pre-service and in-service levels, into question. Findings confirm some of the concepts featured in the literature review about the challenges facing Arabic teachers in the UAE in specific and the Arab countries in general (Taha 2017; Taha-Thomure 2019). What is not explicitly mentioned in the literature and is yet needed is the element of incentivisation that comes with the intention to join the Arabic teaching profession. This is another policy element that was raised in the interviewee discussions and is linked to the entire

process of recruitment and retention. This inquiry is another documentation of this gap, added to the existing body of knowledge about this crucial matter.

Moving on to the next concept, it has two core sub-headings, the need for Arabic language and Arabic education policies on one hand, and, second, the need for a policy that governs the use of the Arabic language in public and virtual spaces. The findings raised the issue that the policies regarding language of instruction have gone through several changes. Arabic deserves to be considered as a language of instruction of other subjects, other than the Arabic language arts, as suggested by the interviewees. However, this is a policy level aspiration as the UAE is committed to developing its bilingual model, that supports its current goals for world-class education system and neo-liberal knowledge economy. The efforts in this direction require a policy review to reconcile all the language priorities, agreeing with (Troudi & Boukadi, 2017; Cook 2017; Canagarajah 2005), and further identifying the gaps more accurately.

There is minimal effectiveness of regulations to implement a nation-wide language policy. What is in place is a single regulation to communicate within government institutions exclusively in Arabic. Interviewee findings showed high appreciation for this law and welcomed the fact that it consolidates the Arab identity of the UAE. Public space still suffers from ill-uses of Arabic and low-quality translation. Currently, one can see a bilingual signage system, however, it is not effectively bilingual. They are English terminology written in Arabic alphabet. In spite of the well-intentioned efforts and the strong political will to sustain the Arabic language, English is still prevalent, and 'bilingualism' is still at an early stage of finding the way to the public space. These concepts are extensively discussed in the literature on the Arabic language policies and their current implications on the economic, educational and cultural aspects of life (Fehri, 2013b).

Concluding with the final idea, the ALI uncovered a discourse of a renewed or a re-branded image of the Arabic language. What seems reasonable at this point is to build on the publicly improved profile of the Arabic language and invest in this discourse as an opportunity to achieve future gains for the Arabic language. This policy investment can be directed in a range of policies for curriculum teaching and learning that will be detailed in the next section, the conceptual discussion.

6.3.3 Conceptual Contribution

The study argued for discourses that were developing through ALI that projected a renewed image of the Arabic language. The analysis of these discourses highlights pathways for policy development for teaching and learning of the Arabic language, as well as the landscape of use of the Arabic language in the public arena. These discourses, that were detailed in the previous chapter, are promising in their potential, and the public is aware of them, but have not yet embraced them in ways that shape their day to day practices. The DHA of the text of interviewees sheds light on the idea that initiatives will remain initiatives if they were not brought forward for further development. The analysed text, with the emerging discourses of *reading* and the need for modernizing the linguistic features and lexical structures of the Arabic language, will open opportunities for proposing new policies for curriculum, teacher preparation and pedagogy, and improving the content quality of published children's literature and textbooks.

At the level of curriculum, I would argue for an opportunity to use the existing renewed curriculum philosophy document (ALI-2) and embed its messages through actual curricular improvements and adaptations that can be achieved at practitioners' and schools' level, in both public and private sector. This would release the schools from the restrictive regulation of having to strictly follow the centrally prescribed textbooks for first language Arabic learners. Put in other words, the suggested is for the decision-makers to de-centralize curriculum design and take the responsibility of curriculum planning and strategizing. This is international best practice that is seen in in countries like Canada and United Kingdom, where there are curriculum policies that provide overall guidance, rather than prescriptive content (www.gov.uk 2019; www.edu.gov.on.ca 2019).

Interviewees offered an opportunity to improve the expectations for learning of Arabic through thoughtfully planned and quality benchmarking assessment tools. The policy can be thought of as a framework for the monitoring of progress and can include a range of strategies for monitoring and assessment of outcomes by third parties, from the region, similar in nature to the work of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, 2019). Such policies for evaluation of learners' outcomes reflect the essence of the expectations set in the blueprint curriculum document, Arabic for Life. It is aspired that the efforts of the government

would be coherent, and policies are expected to logically link together as expressed by Fehri (2013a) & (2013b) and Troudi and Boukadi (2017). At the moment, and as seen from the data in this study, there is still a loose link between what the ALI aspire to achieve for the UAE as a centre of excellence for the Arabic language, and the effective regulations that address the ways the Arabic language is learned in schools.

In spite of the fact that the texts of ALI reflected acknowledgement of the criticality of the challenges, the authorities progressed against their own intentions by producing contradictory regulations, causing practitioners to dilute the key intentions of ALI. In the regulations, the government urged all institutions to raise the standards of pedagogy, while at the same time, they kept the regulation of the number of hours of teaching Arabic minimal, compared to the time allocated for other mainstream languages in the curriculum, leaving the teachers and schools in a constant struggle and restriction while striving to improve students' outcomes. On the other hand, this also means that the licensing program that is currently established needed prerequisite policies linked to teacher pre-service preparation through university degrees and certification. The licensing program will only now recycle the existing manpower, the experienced teachers who are already in the market. This is a healthy policy and sound strategy. Yet, it does not address the root causes of the problem already presented in the literature (Taha-Thomure, 2019b; Taha, 2017), with all the current challenges of teacher preparation.

Along the same lines, the teachers of Arabic and school leaders play a pivotal role in protecting the Arabic language through their daily practice. The data has shown that the Arabic teachers in a majority of cases are often marginalized and not well involved in the bigger picture in the school operations. These attitudes reflect on the way they are addressing the subject they are teaching. Therefore, they themselves have a responsibility of changing this reality if they are passionate and true to their mission. The role of school leaders by and large affects their attitudes and is mobilizing factor in changing this reality in their day to day practice.

As for the use of Arabic in public space, the Arabic language is currently on a spectrum of marketing and media exercise. The opportunity here is to make use of the raised profile of the Arabic language and think of policies that can consolidate the improving image of the Arabic language and set a model for other Arab speaking countries in that respect. The project of building and contributing to Arabic content

invites a multitude of policy options for raising the bar of content and literary publications, as well as the use of Arabic in public spaces and virtually. As the findings of the study have shown, the ALI have opened the way for increased publishing of paper and digital content that feed into children's literature genres. The policy opportunity I am suggesting is to establish a rating system and book classification and levelling criteria that can keep the quality of literature in check and calibrated vis-à-vis the quality of other competitive Western literature. It is an open market for creativity, innovation, and employment in the Arabic language in updated ways that meet the needs of current day learners.

Building Arabic content is a long-term commitment and investment that rests at the moment at the level of a promising and solid political will and committed country leadership. Yet it cannot be realized without informed, consistent and rigorous collaborative efforts between stakeholders from all Arab countries, potentially initiated by the UAE. The UAE already plans to be centre of excellence for the Arabic language in the region. It also awaits a policy that raises the bar for the quality of published Arabic literature and content, physically and digitally, and set the standard benchmarks for the use of MSA in the literature. There are efforts in this respect, but they are still individual independent efforts that are not yet institutionalized. They need public domain, policy level efforts, rather than stay within independent and individual initiatives that have limited outreach. There is evidence in the findings of this research inquiry showing that a number of the interviewees are currently involved in book authoring and publishing projects that invest in renewed Arabic language dictionaries for today's learners. What is needed is a leadership that can muster all these diluted efforts.

The conclusion of this discussion is summarized in Figure 7 below. It captures a suggested model for policy intervention and approach that shows how efforts by the government can be invested in alternative pathways. This remains a conceptual approach that will need executive level details and specifics to be transferred to practice.

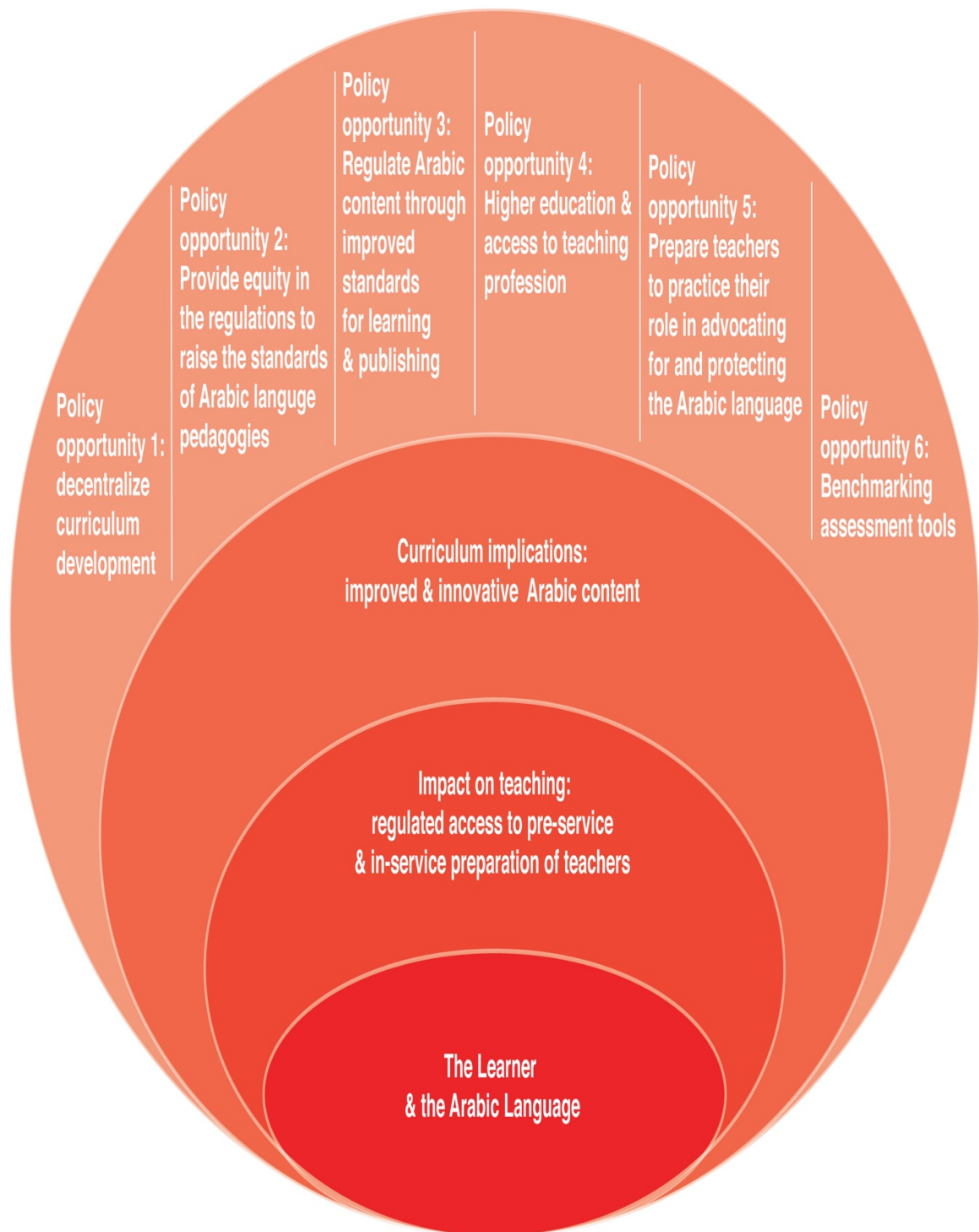


Figure -7- Proposed Policy Intervention Model

This section concludes the areas, ideas and concepts for development to establish future pathways that are informed, and sign posted by the discursive analysis of ALI. I can conclude that the impact of ALI is not yet visible nor influential at the level of the realities of learners, but the policy opportunities and implications are endless. This research inquiry brought the political discourse to the light and helped define the pathways for possible future opportunities for policy interventions, contributing to potential improvements in the area of the Arabic language learning for first language speakers. Figure 8 illustrates the shortcut view of the outcomes of this research, and highlights its key contributing areas, ideas, and concepts.

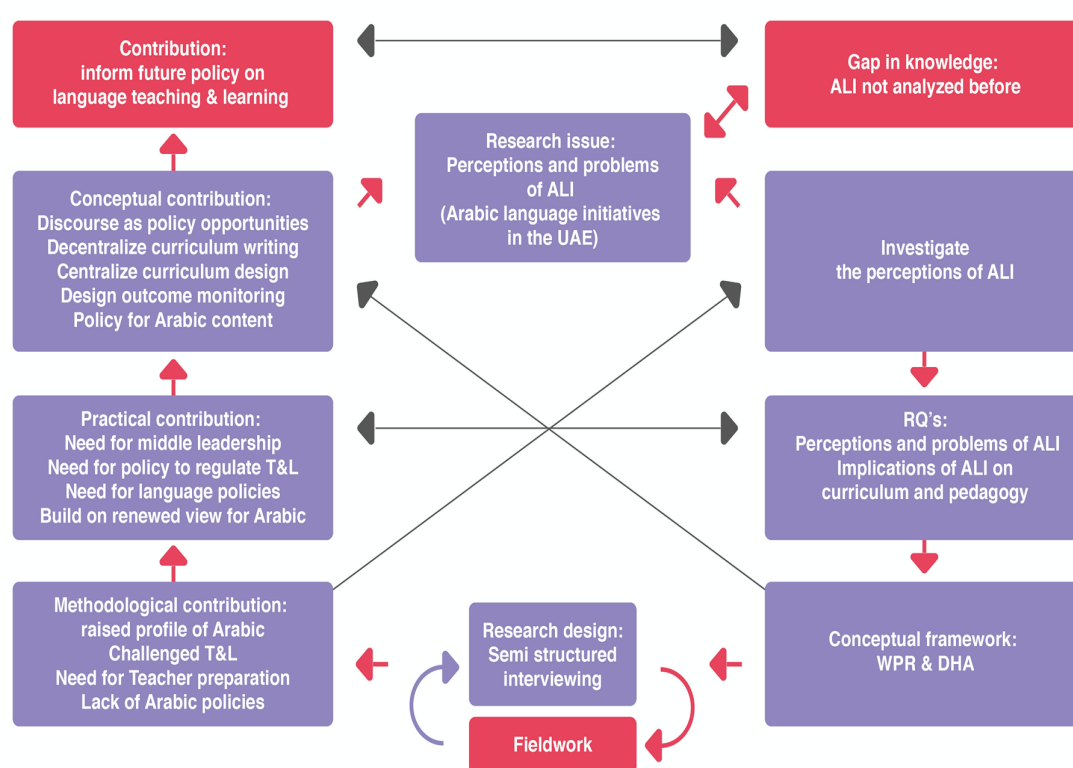


Figure -8- The Magic Circle: The Research Inquiry in A Nutshell
(Trafford & Leshem, 2008)

6.4 Implications of this Research

The implications of this research are wide ranging. The below aspects have to be linked to the discussion on the outcomes of this research. There are implications on at least eight aspects of the pedagogy of the Arabic language that I will detail below.

6.4.1 Classroom Practice

The first key implication of this research inquiry is related to classroom practice. This research provided further evidence for the urgent need to address the pedagogy of the Arabic language for first language learners. The evident gaps in the teaching approaches that are mostly textbook driven and far from engaging learners or motivating them are due for serious consideration. Teachers' content knowledge and pedagogical skills and expertise need to be focal in any efforts towards achieving better outcomes for learners of Arabic. The teachers have underperformed either in the pedagogy of Arabic or in its subject knowledge. Both skills sets need to be addressed in any effort to advance the way the Arabic language is taught. The main implication for changes in Arabic pedagogies involve a move toward student inquiry driven approaches, dynamic learning environments that motivate and inspire learners to appreciate the Arabic language.

6.4.2 Arabic Language Teacher Education

Effective teaching practice is a direct outcome of teacher training and preparation. When existing Arabic pedagogies are not effective, the area of teacher preparation comes into question. This research inquiry is another call for focusing efforts on pre-service, in-service, and continuous professional development (CPD) of teachers of Arabic. As discussed by participants in this research and acknowledged within the text of ALI, the existing systems of teacher preparation are deficient in their focus on the required set of skills for enabling teachers to implement best practice in Arabic language teaching. This implication is multifaceted and requires a number of areas of focus in this regard. It addresses the existing higher education provision for teacher qualifications. It also refers to the quality of continuous CPD being available for Arabic language in both government and private sectors.

The problem with the upcoming licensing program is that it is designed for all the teaching manpower in the UAE, not only the pool of Arabic teachers. It is a system designed to raise the quality of all teaching in the country. This national filter will keep incompetent teaching out of the system. However, it is a broad comprehensive approach that applies to teachers who are already in service. This means that if teachers do not make it through this process, they risk losing their

existing jobs. However, there remains a concern about the quality of freshly graduated teachers from higher education colleges, whose skill sets are insufficient. The main reason is that they did not go through a college program that appropriately prepares them to be expert Arabic language teachers for first learners. Such university programs do not yet exist. This research inquiry is implying that authorities and decision makers who influence higher education systems may want to start thinking about focused Arabic language teaching preparatory colleges and programs.

This implication can be extended to address the current ad hoc privatized programs for Arabic language training and private consultation services that are not yet regulated at a national level. It is a thought-provoking area to consider the reasons that led to the increase and growth of private Arabic pedagogy consultants in the UAE during the recent years to support private schools and Arabic language teachers through in-service training programs.

6.4.3 Curriculum Design

A third key implication is the quality of current curriculum design. The existing system in the UAE, after the most recent reviews, is a content driven, literature supported curriculum, designed by the Ministry of Education. The curriculum is mainly resourced with a textbook that is mandatory for use by all L1 learners in the UAE, with the possibility of further enrichment with external literature. Based on the outcomes of this investigation, some of the root causes of the unsatisfactory pedagogy are associated with the mandatory curriculum published by the MoE. The main implication is that there is room for exploring standard based curricular designs that are centrally planned but supported by independent resources that are approved in the UAE.

6.4.4 Materials Development

One of the implications of this research is the need to review all the content and materials associated with the Arabic L1 learners, starting from the quality of literature required for teaching K-12, alongside the main textbook, to the literature that is growing by virtue of increased publication of works for young readers and for

older students. Such an outcome was discussed by interviewees as emerging due to the increased need for published books in recent years, following the issuance of the reading law. The quality of authoring and writing is not benchmarked nor leveled for quality of content. A clear implication is that there needs to be a system for categorizing books, reviewing their quality and regulating the production of these books, to support educators and the general public in making the right choices of resources, while ensuring that quality of the literature is linked to a recognized set of standards of the Arabic language.

Last, focusing on a culture of reading is justified and valid in a country that intends to improve its Arabic language content. The emerging discourse of reading from the analysis of ALI suggests that learners of Arabic will continue to require increasing amounts of children's literature and books in the Arabic language.

6.4.5 Assessment and Testing

A crucial implication of this research inquiry revolves around the issue of assessment and evaluation of outcomes of Arabic L1 learners. A nationwide assessment and benchmarking system and tools are overdue. Educators need benchmarking assessments that can provide them with valid measures of students' outcomes at ends of phases in the Arabic language literacy. An assessment and a benchmarking system can regulate the processes of monitoring of progress of outcomes and over time. Currently these standards-based assessments do not exist. The lack of standards-based assessments has encouraged independent educational providers to produce assessments that may not be linked to any recognized benchmarks or set of standards. What is needed is a set of assessment tools that provide a valid measure of the skills of learners in Arabic L1 at a high enough standard that fulfill the aspirations of Arabic L1 learners and educators.

6.4.6 Programme Evaluation and School Inspection Regimes

This implication refers to the evaluation of the quality of the provision of Arabic language in all schools and institutions. The intention to improve the quality of the Arabic language pedagogy and curriculum implies that there is a need for a system to regulate, evaluate, accredit, or support the whole process. If educators are

concerned about how they are operating and performing, they can use a support system that works with them to provide feedback on the quality of their performance. Such an evaluation system, alternatively some contexts have developed school inspection models, can use the results of assessments as a benchmark to start the conversation, and proceed with addressing all concerns to evaluate the school's provision for the Arabic language.

In the case of the UAE, there are inspection models operated by the government for both government and private schools, currently under the mandate of the MoE, KHDA, SPEA and ADEK, as discussed in the literature review. The findings for this research imply that if there are measures of quality to be observed in the provision of the Arabic language in K-12 context, inspection models or otherwise evaluation models may want to re-think how the curriculum for Arabic can be used and delivered, and how the teaching of the Arabic is best exemplified for L1 learners. Inspectors and programme evaluators need to be well informed about the latest and most effective practices in the teaching and learning of Arabic as L1 to be able to have impact on schools and drive positive change in their approaches. These evaluation models, whether they are inspections or accreditation systems need to be flexible enough and cognizant of all the factors that affect learners, and therefore, may need to reconsider their approaches.

6.4.7 School Leadership and Management

It goes without saying that school leadership is a focal driver of the pedagogy of the Arabic language. Effective leadership that understands the particular context of the Arabic language and the minimum expected outcomes for L1 learners can make a change in the way this language is taught. The implications of this research point to a high degree of responsibility and accountability for school leaders in relation to the outcomes of their learners. Again, the diverse schooling landscape in the UAE produced a wide range of leadership models faced with the challenge of coming to terms with the realities of Arabic L1 learners. For example, school leaders who are none Arab speaking, which is the case of a majority of leaders in international schools in the UAE, have always found it daunting to understand and evaluate the quality of their Arabic language provision. The findings of this research point to an urgently needed decision making and leadership capacity in middle level

management. This means that the leadership systems need to be flexible enough and proactive in accommodating the needs of the Arabic language departments within their structures and resources, to impact learners' outcomes.

6.4.8 Parental Engagement in Children's Learning

The findings of this study point clearly to Arab speaking parents being influential factors in driving their children's ability to learn the Arabic language. For reasons explained in earlier sections, the prevalence of the English language and the socio-economic and cultural factors that influence the learner's choices for speaking in Arabic are mainly linked to parental choices to engage in their children's learning in the Arabic language. When Arab speaking parents choose to avoid speaking in Arabic with their children, thinking this will improve the levels of their English language acquisition, they will have to think again.

On another level, the number of private and international schools in the UAE is continuously growing and is one of the largest in the world. The cultures of these schools are highly immersive in English, with little efforts to make the Arabic language visible in the daily operations of the school. Additionally, Arabic is offered for limited number of lessons per week. Given this context, parents are struggling with the choice of wanting their children to learn Arabic and at the same time they want the higher quality of education offered by an English medium school. As a result, parents tend to compromise one factor or the other. This research is implying that parents need to factor in all these aspects when they make the choices of their children's school.

Thirdly, the demographics in international schools in the UAE have clearly shifted during the past 15 years from having totally foreign and Western student populations, to having a majority of students of Arab origins with dual passports. In return, given this context, there has been no shift happening in the priorities of international and private schools to address the growing language needs of Arab speaking learners.

6.5 Limitations of the Research

There are limitations of this research inquiry that restrict the extent to which the findings can be generalized. The first one is that the context of the UAE is different and unique, in comparison with other Arab countries in terms of the quality of international presence and the social, cultural socio-economic factors.

The second limitation is the quality of regulations and the existing policy structure that regulates the entire education system in the UAE. The UAE school structure of schools, including public and private sectors, their diverse student population are unique given the social and cultural factors that contribute to this difference. Any implications suggested in this study, at the level of policy considerations, have to be thought of on a case by case basis, if the context of other Arab countries is brought into discussion. Interviewees often times were not able to draw a comparison with other systems, initiatives, policies in place to develop the conversations about the ALI.

This being said, the line of thinking about the situation of absent Arabic language policies anywhere else remains valid for all countries. This research continues to be an invitation for thinking ahead of what the Arabic language needs in each individual country. The purpose, as mentioned earlier, is to join the efforts at country level to invest in the Arabic language. This level of cross-country policy development can be extended through this research, but not at the level of internal and specific policy needs that I identified specifically for the UAE.

6.6 Conclusion and Future Research Prospects

This study investigated the impact of a range of Arabic language initiatives that were launched over the past decade, and are still ongoing in the UAE, with the motivation to sustain and protect the Arabic language. The study aimed to investigate the nature and perceptions of educators and decision makers in relation to these initiatives and consider its implications for curriculum and advancement of pedagogy of Arabic language.

The outcomes of the research highlighted a range of discourses that I critically analyzed to uncover the underpinning issues and root causes and factors that have contributed to a perceived deficiency in learners' capacity and skills in using their

mother tongue, Arabic. It highlighted how participants perceived the ALI and how they identified their problems. The study analyzed these ideas, concepts and narratives from policy discourse critique perspective, not with the intention of going into the details of what teaching and learning practices that can address the discussed challenges. The study was concluded with a proposed model for policy intervention, that I referred to as policy opportunities, that can signpost future policy endeavors for the Arabic language in general, and for Arabic language education in particular.

My recommendations for future research and practical applications are significant and these are listed below in order of their importance.

1. Research to create language policy plans and strategies that will support Arabic for first language learners, meet their immediate and current needs, and translate those strategies and plans in curriculum guidelines following international best practice.
2. Research to modernize Arabic lexical and syntactical structure with the purpose of updating the language and renewing its vocabulary and dictionaries that take into consideration the needs of all learners in the 21st century and the knowledge boom, in ways that support bilingual language learning models, and that take into consideration their current capacity in using the Arabic language.
3. Research to support curriculum design and planning at a government level, that would develop the efforts started in the ALI-2, Arabic for Life, which is a blue print of a curriculum philosophy.
4. Research to identify and develop criteria for modernizing the use of the Arabic language in children's literature and in public and virtual space, to improve the image of the Arabic language and ensure that it is coherently standardized for learners of Arabic.
5. Research to look into possible models for developing higher education preparation and certification of teachers of Arabic at a professional and focused level that is in line with international best practices.
6. Research that can assess opportunities for investing in the Arabic language content at a regional Arab level, and not only at the level of the UAE, to understand the prospects for its actualization. The UAE pioneered in giving attention to this need. These efforts are significant and require financial

investments. It is only reasonable for other Arab countries to adopt and extend these efforts to be able to boost the presence of the Arabic language.

I identified the above research opportunities that I thought are of priority at this stage. In my opinion, these can constitute ground work for the conceptual policy model that I proposed earlier. This research inquiry continues to be a foundational piece of work, as expressed in the introduction to this report, that can be developed further for future plans for improving the Arabic language. In as much as these initiatives are appreciated, they are opportunities for reflection and strategizing language use, language content and language teaching.

The introduction of Arabic language initiatives in the UAE are assumed in this study to have emerged to meet a need, most probably a need that is not met because of the absence of urgently needed policies. The ALI provided the ground for starting this crucial conversation, that I believe directed this study to contribute with concepts and ideas around future policy interventions. In the current context of globalized economies, and neo-liberalized economies in the GCC countries, it is of utmost priority for the Arab countries to rethink their Arabic language policy and set the policy infrastructure in this area (Fehri, 2013a; Troudi & Al Hafidh, 2017; Troudi & Boukadi, 2017). What comes next cannot be predicted as the journey of Arabic language initiatives, the ALI's, is still ongoing at the time of writing this report. It is therefore the type of research that can be extended and developed, pending upcoming developments in the Arabic language policy landscape in general and in the ALI's of the UAE in particular.

6.7 Some Personal Reflections on my Professional Growth During the Course of this Research

The initial motivations of conducting this research inquiry, as iterated at the onset of this thesis report, is to use the UAE as a model for exploring and questioning the Arabic language initiatives, ALI's, with the intention of using the lessons learned in informing policy in other Arab countries whose language is Arabic.

Going back to the earlier phases of the thinking about this project, as it was a slightly different topic, I can trace my learning moments to have begun during that particular stage. My attempt to seek information from my context and network and

seek access to potential participants was a learning journey. I experienced a few instances of rejection and disappointment when I sought the support of some potential participants. Then I realized that people may not always be able to deliver, in spite of their good intentions. From that point and on, I can say confidently that I learned how to stand up and move on. I had to drive my own boat and make this research happen.

I can trace a major milestone of professional growth as I designed my methodology for this research. As daunting a task as it might have been, for me it turned out to be major learning in this research. It was the challenge of figuring out the route of travel in critical discourse analysis. I have always been gravitating towards reading CDA articles and examples around a range of policy topics, but it was a totally new territory to do this in my own context and work with CDA as a researcher. The insight that was emerging as I linked all the dots and analysed the topics, discourses, and conclusions, brought me satisfaction and a sense of achievement. In this kind of work, there are concepts and aspects that we take for granted. It was a real insight to understand what it means to be a subject “living in the discourse” which I wrote at an early stage in my methodology chapter. Now I know what it really means.

The third key learning was actually the interviews and how I conducted them. Interviewing gave me an insight into some of my participants’ thinking and aspirations. A few of the participants were personal connections from previous work contexts. The interview topics and questions showed me another side of their thinking, and it was a lot of learning at a professional level to see clearly how people think and operate in the professional context of the Arabic language teaching. The process of maneuvering through the questions, to progress through the conversation, to get the responses that I needed taught me how people can be diplomatic and force me to read through their lines.

I reflected a lot on my academic writing style as I went back and rewrote Chapter One, after concluding the research and writing-up process. I encountered several of those “what was I thinking” moments in the quality of the writing that I practically drafted a year and a half ago. The length of this duration from the beginning of the research inquiry till the end, helped me visually track my writing growth.

Finally, I reflected on how this work was at all possible with a full-time job and two little children. I realized that there is a lot of power in the process of research, that keeps unfolding and motivating the researcher in every step of the way, driving commitment and diligence. I have been chasing this idea for two and a half years since the initial brainstorming stages, where initially I did not have a clue how it will end up. This powerful idea was extremely motivating to engage all my strength, skills, and time to keep finding out and writing till the very end.

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APPENDIX A. INTERVIEW GUIDE

- Induction into and explanation of the research project.
- Check understanding of the ethical considerations and sign approval form.
- *Recording begins after stating position and profile of interviewee, and date.*

The 6 *WPR policy framework questions* are designated as ‘*main*’; the questions that are sub-headed with lower case letters preceding or following the ‘*main*’ question are intended to ease the way to the *main* question or probe further around the same topic of each main question.

Introductory

- a. How would you describe the status of the Arabic language in the UAE?

Q1 (main)

What is your view of the current and most recent L1 Arabic language initiatives of the UAE?

- b. Do you think that it is significant that most of these initiatives are introduced by the HRH Mohammad bin Rashid?
- c. What has been your role in relation to these initiatives?

المقدمات

كيف تصف حال اللغة العربية في دولة الإمارات العربية المتحدة؟

- ما رأيك بالمبادرات الأخيرة للنهوض باللغة العربية للناطقين بها في دولة الإمارات؟
- أ. هل تعتقد أن لدور صاحب السمو الشيخ محمد بن راشد في إطلاق معظم هذه المبادرات أهمية في هذا الشأن؟
- ب. هل كان لك أي دور أو ارتباط بأي من هذه المبادرات؟

Framing the status of the Arabic language for L1 (problematization)

Q2 (main)

Looking at the ALI and the way they were presented as a range of initiatives, charter, projects..., what do they tell you about the status of the teaching and/or learning of the MSA for L1 learners?

(i.e. how is the status of Arabic L1 perceived through these ALI?)

- a. How does the view of the authorities, as reflected in these initiatives, compare to your view of the status of Arabic language for L1 learners?
And do the general public see it the same way?

مقاربة حال اللغة العربية للناطقين بها

إذا نظرنا إلى مبادرات اللغة العربية والأسلوب الذي قدمت فيه (قانون للقراءة، مشاريع وجوائز....) ما الذي توحى به هذه المقاربة لناحية حال تعليم وتعلم اللغة العربية الفصيحة؟
(يعني كيف تقرأ حال اللغة العربية من منظار هذه المبادرات؟)

أ. كيف تقارن نظرة الجهات المسؤولة إلى اللغة العربية (والتي نراها من خلال هذه المبادرات) بنظرتك أنت إلى حال اللغة العربية للناطقين بها؟
وهل تتبادر في أذهان عموم الناس النظرة ذاتها للغة العربية؟

Wider Context

Q3 (main)

The Arab speaking countries have witnessed different approaches by governmental and non-governmental entities to address the teaching and learning of Arabic as a mother tongue.

- What initiatives in other Arabic speaking countries are you aware of?
- What are your opinions of these initiatives?
- How do they compare to those of the UAE?

السياق الأوسع للغة العربية
شهدت الدول العربية مقاربات مختلفة مع مرور الزمن (منها المبادرات الحكومية ومنها مشاريع من جهات غير حكومية) لمعالجة قضايا تعليم وتعلم اللغة العربية كلغة أم.
أ. هل تعرف عن أي من هذه المبادرات في الدول العربية الأخرى؟
ب. ما رأيك بها؟
ت. كيف تقارن هذه المبادرات مع تلك الخاصة بدولة الإمارات العربية المتحدة؟

Other approaches

Q4 (main)

Do you feel there is something about the situation of Arabic as L1 that is not being discussed but which we should be discussing?

In your opinion, what else can be done to improve the use of the (MSA) the Arabic language as an L1?

Do you think there are other ways of seeing the situation of L1 Arabic?

- What do you think influences L1 learners in their choice to use MSA?
- What is your opinion of the Arabic reading challenge?
- Do you feel that the Arabic reading challenge has had an impact? why? /or why not?
- To what extent have the ALI changed the Arabic-speaking public's perceptions of the Arabic language?

مقاربات بديلة
هل تعتقد أن هناك أمور ترتبط بمسألة اللغة العربية للناطقين بها لم تطرح بعد على طاولة البحث؟ ومن الجدير بنا أن نتطرق إليها؟

برأيك ماذا يجب أن نفعل أيضاً إضافة لما سبق كي نحسن من استخدام اللغة العربية الفصيحة كلغة أولى؟

- هل هناك من زوايا أخرى للنظر إلى مسألة اللغة العربية؟
- أ. ما الذي يؤثر في اختيار المتعلم لاستخدام اللغة العربية الفصيحة؟
- ب. ما رأيك بتحدي القراءة العربي؟
- ت. برأيك هل ترك تحدي القراءة العربي أثراً؟ لماذا؟
- ث. لأي حد تعتقد أن مبادرات اللغة العربية قد غيرت من نظرة العامة لمسألة اللغة العربية؟

Impact of ALI

Q5 (main)

In your opinion, what do you think the impact of these ALI on:

1. Teachers of Arabic as L1?
2. Learners of Arabic as L1?
3. Curriculum for teaching Arabic as L1?
4. Pedagogy for teaching Arabic as L1?

Q5: To what extent are people influenced by popular discussions about L1 Arabic, e.g. in the media? What are the effects of these initiatives of the UAE on other Arab speaking countries in the region?

أثر مبادرات اللغة العربية

- برأيك، ما هو أثر مبادرات اللغة العربية موضوع هذا البحث على ما يلي:
- أ. معلمي اللغة العربية للناطقين بها؟
- ب. متعلمي اللغة العربية للناطقين بها؟
- ت. منهاج تدريس اللغة العربية للناطقين بها؟
- ث. أساليب التدريس الخاصة باللغة العربية للناطقين بها؟

لأي حد تعتقد أن الناس قد تأثروا بالحديث عن اللغة العربية، في وسائل الإعلام مثلاً؟ وما هي آثار هذه المبادرات على الدول العربية الأخرى في المنطقة؟

Future approaches to Arabic L1 policy

Q6 (main)

Under which conditions would the teaching and learning of the MSA by L1 learners work best?

What types of policies would you like to see Arab governments adopting to improve the teaching and curriculum planning of Arabic for L1 learners?

- a. How do you think we could improve the way we support the teaching of Arabic?
- b. How can we develop workable approaches for the teaching and/or use of the MSA by L1 learners?

النظرة المستقبلية إلى سياسات اللغة العربية

ما هي الظروف التي من شأنها أن تساهم في إنجاح تعليم وتعلم اللغة العربية للناطقين بها؟
ما هي السياسات التي تتمنى لو تسعى الدول العربية إلى انتهاجها من أجل تحسين عمليات التدريس والتعلم والتخطيط في المناهج الخاصة باللغة العربية للناطقين بها؟

- أ. ما هي برأيك الأساليب التي من شأنها أن تساعدنا في تحسين تدريس مادة اللغة العربية؟
ب. كيف يمكننا أن نطور مقاربات عملية لتدريس واستخدام اللغة العربية الفصيحة للناطقين بها؟



APPENDIX B

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

April 2019

Dear Mr./Mrs. _____,

Doctoral research inquiry on the impact of the UAE Arabic Language Initiatives

I would like to ask your consent to conduct a 45-minute, audio recorded, anonymous interview with you while involving you as a participant in a research inquiry about the impact of UAE Arabic language initiatives. This research is a requirement in partial completion of my Doctor of Education degree at the University of Bath.

During the interview, you will be asked to respond to a set of open-ended questions that will help the researcher gain an understanding of the impact of government led initiatives to improve the use of the Arabic language by L1 users, taking the UAE Arabic language initiatives as an example.

I plan to make an audio recording of your interview discussion. For the purposes of the research, only the researcher will use the audio recording to transcribe the data. The transcripts of interviews will be used for the sole purpose of this research inquiry. Parts of the transcripts may be shared if needed with the supervisors of this research Dr. Trevor Grimshaw and Dr. Janina Iwaniec to establish trustworthiness of the data collection process. The transcribed material will be securely archived at the University of Bath and will be destroyed within five years after being collected.

Your identity will remain anonymous and will never appear in any reports of this research. Participation in this research involves no known risks to you. You may end your permission at any time with no negative consequences. You can withdraw from the project at any time with no negative implications.

Consent Form

Please *tick* as appropriate.

☐ I am willing to participate in this research project.

☐ I am not willing to participate in this research project.

Please print your name, sign and date and return this form:

(signature)

Date



APPENDIX C

PARTICIPANT LETTER OF INVITATION

April 2019

Dear -----,

Subject: Invitation to participate in a Doctoral research inquiry about the impact of the UAE Arabic Language Initiatives

I would be honoured if you can accept my invitation to participate in my research inquiry that explores the impact of the UAE Arabic language initiatives. This research is a key requirement towards completion of my Doctor of Education degree at the University of Bath, the United Kingdom.

You have been selected as a valued participant because of your unique experience and perspective on policies, teaching and learning of the Arabic language.

Research purpose

This research is intended to revisit the current initiatives for the improvement of the Arabic language use across the Arab-speaking world, taking the UAE Arabic language initiatives as an example. This research will analyze the impact of the Arabic language initiatives lead by the Federal government of the UAE, driven by the country's Vision 2021 and its key national priorities. The attached list highlights the initiatives under study.

Interview process

During a 45-minute interview, you will be asked to respond to a set of open-ended questions I have added a sample of these questions at the bottom of this letter, for your kind reference.

I plan to make an audio recording of our interview discussion. For the purposes of the research, only the researcher will use the audio recording to transcribe the data. The transcripts of interviews will be used for the sole purpose of this research inquiry. Parts of the transcripts may be shared if needed with the supervisors of this research Dr. Trevor Grimshaw and Dr. Janina Iwaniec to establish trustworthiness of the data collection process. The transcribed material will be securely archived at the University of Bath and will be destroyed within five years after being collected.

Anonymity

Your identity will remain anonymous and your name will never appear in any reports of this research.

Participation in this research involves no known risks to you. You are entitled to end your permission at any time with no negative consequences. You can withdraw from the project at any time with no negative implications. A brief 'anonymous' profile reflecting and summarizing your experience in general terms will be appended to the research report after your approval on the wording of the text.

I would be grateful if you would indicate your decision to participate in this research with a message to this email address: abc30@bath.ac.uk

If you have any further questions about this research, please feel free to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs. Amani Batakji

Dubai, United Arab Emirates

Sample questions of the interview: *(not limited to the below)*

- What is your view of the current and most recent L1 Arabic language initiatives?
- What has spurred the introduction of the Arabic language initiatives in the UAE?
- What is your opinion of the Arabic reading challenge?
- Do you think people's views of Arabic for first language learners have changed over time? Why?

إبريل ٢٠١٩

حضرة ----- المحترم،

تحية طيبة وبعد،

الموضوع: دعوة للمشاركة في دراسة بحثية لنيل شهادة الدكتوراه تتناول أثر مبادرات دولة الامارات العربية المتحدة لتعزيز مكانة اللغة العربية

يسعدني ويشرفني قبولكم دعوتي للمشاركة في الدراسة البحثية التي تؤهلني لنيل شهادة الدكتوراه في الدراسات التربوية، والتي تتناول في موضوعها أثر مبادرات تعزيز اللغة العربية والتي بدأت بإطلاقها دولة الامارات العربية المتحدة. وتعد هذه الدراسة شرطاً رئيسياً لإتمام المتطلبات الخاصة بشهادة الدكتوراه من جامعة باث في المملكة المتحدة. ان اختياركم للمشاركة في هذه الدراسة هو مبني على أساس خبراتكم المميزة التي ترتبط بموضوعها واهتمامكم بشؤون اللغة العربية وسياساتها وما يختص بتعليم وتعلم لغة الضاد.

أهداف الدراسة

ترمي هذه الدراسة إلى إجراء مطالعة نقدية للمبادرات التي تهدف إلى الإغلاء من شأن اللغة العربية في جميع دول العالم العربي من خلال دراسة أنموذج دولة الإمارات العربية المتحدة في هذا المجال. تتوخى الدراسة تحليل أثر مبادرات اللغة العربية التي تقودها الحكومة الاتحادية في مساعيها لتحقيق رؤية دولة الإمارات ٢٠٢١ وأولوياتها الوطنية. نعرض في المرفق قائمة بالمبادرات موضوع هذه الدراسة.

المقابلات

المطلوب من جانبكم المشاركة في مقابلة فردية تستمر لمدة ٤٥ دقيقة، يتم خلالها طرح مجموعة من الأسئلة المفتوحة الإجابات (أورد نموذجاً منها في نهاية هذا المستند).

هذا وسوف يتم إجراء تسجيل صوتي لهذه المقابلة، بحيث يستخدم التسجيل حصراً لأغراض هذه الدراسة. مع التأكيد على المحافظة على سرية هذه التسجيلات وحصرية استخدامها من قبل الباحث. قد تتم مشاركة أجزاء من هذه التسجيلات مع المشرفين الأكاديميين على هذه الدراسة (كل من د. تريفير غريمشو ود. جانينا إيواننيك) لتثبيت مصداقيتها. أما نصوص المقابلات فسوف تتم أرشفتها في سجلات جامعة باث على أساس إتلافها نهائياً بعد مرور خمس سنوات على إتمام جمع المعلومات السرية.

سوف تبقى هويات المشاركين في هذه الدراسة سرية، مع العلم أنه لن يتم ذكر أسماء المشاركين في أي جزء من أجزاء الدراسة، بما يضمن احترام خصوصيتهم التامة وسرية المعلومات التي يدلون بها. علماً بضرورة احتفاظ كل مشارك بحقه بالاعتذار عن الاستمرار بالمشاركة في هذه الدراسة خلال أي وقت، دون أن ينتج عن هذا الاعتذار أية تبعات سلبية. هذا وسوف يطلب من المشارك مراجعة نص "النبذة الشخصية" والموافقة عليها، التي سوف تعد خصيصاً لهدف هذه الدراسة دون أن تشير إلى هويته.

مشاركتم في هذه الدراسة بالغة الأهمية، لهذا أقدر لكم التأكيد أو الاعتذار عن المشاركة بالرد على هذه الرسالة على

عنواني البريدي التالي: abc30@bath.ac.uk

وتفضلوا بقبول فائق الاحترام

أمانى بتكجي

دبي، الإمارات العربية المتحدة

فيما يلي نماذج عن بعض الأسئلة التي سوف تطرح خلال المقابلة (على سبيل المثال لا الحصر):

- ما رأيك بالمبادرات الخاصة بتعزيز مكانة اللغة العربية للناطقين بها؟
- ما الذي أدى إلى إطلاق هذه المبادرات برأيك؟
- كيف تقرأ الأثر الذي تركه "تحدي القراءة العربي"؟
- هل تعتقد أن النظرة العامة تجاه اللغة العربية للناطقين بها قد تغيرت مع مرور الزمن؟ لماذا؟
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APPENDIX D

LIST OF ARABIC LANGUAGE INITIATIVES (ALI) OF THE UAE

Arabic Language Initiative	Text codes as used in data analysis
UAE Arabic language charter - issued by the Federal government of the UAE	ALI-1
Al Arabiya Lugha lil Hayat (Arabic for Life)	ALI-2
Arabic <i>Reading Challenge</i>	ALI-3
Mohammed Bin Rashed Arabic language Award	ALI-4
Law for the government communications in Arabic	ALI-5
Arabic Language Academy in Sharjah	ALI-6
Arabic digital content	ALI-7
UAE National Law of Reading	ALI-8
"Lughati" is an initiative launched by HH Dr. Shaikh Sultan Bin Mohammad Al Qasimi	ALI-9
The cyber initiative - hash tag "#Bilarabi" meaning "#inArabic	ALI-10
KHDA initiative entitled "Ish Al Arabiya" where teachers of Arabic across schools of Dubai are supported as a community of practice	ALI-11
KHDA initiatives to advance the profile of the Arabic language through the inspection operations of the Dubai School Inspection Bureau (DSIB).	ALI-12
The "Madrassa" e-learning platform by Mohammed Bin Rashed Global Initiatives	ALI-13

Detailed Descriptions

1. "UAE Arabic language charter" issued by the Federal government of the UAE, outlines a reading policy and promotes the engagement of all institutions and entities in the UAE in the pursuit of reading.
2. The document of "Al Arabiya Lugha lil Hayat" (Arabic for Life), launched and endorsed by HRH Mohammed Bin Rashed outlines best practices of Arabic language pedagogy.
3. The "Arabic *Reading Challenge*" is a project to encourage readership among students in the Arab world, with each child from the Arab speaking countries committed to read 50 books during the academic year.
4. The "Mohammed Bin Rashed Arabic language Award" is designed for individuals, entities, and governments for their efforts in disseminating and promoting the use of the Arabic language in public life.
5. Law for the government communications in Arabic
6. Arabic Language Academy in Sharjah, by HRH, Sheikh Dr. Sultan Al Qassimi, to support the Arabic language through scholarly works and research efforts, as well as sponsoring related programs.
7. Arabic digital content
8. UAE National Law of Reading
9. "Lughati" is an initiative launched by HH Dr. Shaikh Sultan Bin Mohammad Al Qasimi, Member of the Supreme Council and Ruler of Sharjah, which aims to distribute tablets with specially designed Arabic language educational programs and applications to students and teachers of government schools.
10. The cyber initiative to use the hash tag "#Bilarabi" meaning "#inArabic" launched by the Mohammed Bin Rashed Foundation to promote the use of the Arabic language digitally.

11. The initiative by KHDA entitled "Ish Al Arabiya" where teachers of Arabic across schools of Dubai are supported as a community of practice continuously sharing best practice amongst them to improve the teaching and learning of the Arabic language.
12. KHDA' initiatives to advance the profile of the Arabic language teaching and learning, and student outcomes through the inspection operations of the Dubai School Inspection Bureau (DSIB).
13. The "Madrasa" e-learning platform is a digital school project by Mohammed Bin Rashed Global Initiatives. It includes 5000 video supported lesson in physics, chemistry, biology, mathematics, and general sciences, covering all educational curricula from K-12, comprising a digitally integrated school experience in the Arabic language for less advantaged children.

1. قانون القراءة الصادر عن الحكومة الاتحادية والذي يلخص سياسة القراءة ويعزز مشاركة جميع مؤسسات الدولة ومرافقها في السعي لممارسة القراءة.
2. وثيقة "العربية لغة للحياة" التي أطلقها صاحب السمو الشيخ محمد بن راشد والتي ترسم الخطى الأساسية للممارسات الفضلى في تعليم اللغة العربية.
3. تحدي القراءة وهو مشروع يرمي إلى تشجيع أبناء الوطن العربي على القراءة، من خلال التزام كل طفل مشارك بإتمام قراءة خمسين كتاباً خلال العام الدراسي الواحد.
4. جائزة محمد بن راشد للغة العربية التي تستهدف الأفراد والمؤسسات، الحكومية منها والخاصة لمكافأة مساعيها في نشر وتعزيز مكانة اللغة العربية في الحياة العامة. القانون الوطني للقراءة
5. قانون المكاتبية بين جميع هيئات ومؤسسات الدولة باللغة العربية.
6. مجمع اللغة العربية في الشارقة، مؤسس من قبل صاحب السمو الشيخ د. سلطان القاسمي لدعم اللغة العربية من خلال الأعمال البحثية والأكاديمية ودعم البرامج ذات الصلة.
7. جهود باتجاه تعزيز المحتوى الرقمي العربي
8. القانون الوطني للقراءة في الإمارات العربية المتحدة
9. مبادرة "لغتي" التي أطلقها صاحب السمو الدكتور الشيخ سلطان بن محمد القاسمي، عضو المجلس الأعلى وحاكم إمارة الشارقة، والهادفة إلى توزيع أجهزة لوحية على جميع الطلبة في المدارس الحكومية، تحتوي على تطبيقات تربوية خاصة تدعم تعليم اللغة العربية.
10. المبادرة الالكترونية التي أطلقتها مؤسسة محمد بن راشد لاستخدام وسم #بالعربي للتشجيع على استخدام اللغة العربية في المواقع الالكترونية.
11. مبادرة "عش العربية" التي تنفذها هيئة المعرفة والتنمية البشرية، والتي تهدف إلى دعم معلمي اللغة العربية وتعزيز دورهم كحلقة مهنية فاعلة تتشارك باستمرار أفضل وأحدث الممارسات الناجحة في مجالات تعليم وتعلم اللغة العربية.
12. جهود هيئة المعرفة والتنمية البشرية لتعزيز أهمية تعليم وتعلم اللغة العربية ونواتج الطلبة الناطقين بها.
13. منصة "مدرسة" الذي أطلقته مؤخراً مؤسسة محمد بن راشد للمبادرات الدولية كمشروع تربوي إلكتروني يتضمن ٥٠٠٠ حصة دراسية في مواد الفيزياء وعلوم الأحياء والكيمياء والرياضيات باللغة العربية، وهذه المواد مبنية على مناهج مدرسية إلكترونية لجميع المراحل العمرية.

APPENDIX E

PARTICIPANTS' PROFESSIONAL PROFILES

1. Dr. Raya

The participant is currently the Chairperson of the Arabic Language at a prominent university in the UAE. She previously served in senior academic posts in the gulf region including positions of deanship of a teachers' college. Her research is focused on the Arabic language teaching and learning. Her research projects are funded by governmental and regional non-governmental organizations, addressing issues related to Arabic language policy and curriculum standards. She is a member of a number of well-known award committees.

2. Mr. Ziad

The participant is a highly experienced school inspector for a government authority and regulator in the UAE. He had experience previously as school improvement consultant and a trainer for English Language teachers with significant experience in school management and leadership. He was involved in projects such as the development of professional standards for teachers and school leaders at a policy level. At the beginning of his career, he taught English for many years and served as a Head teacher in several Arab speaking countries. His experience has been exclusively in countries undergoing education reforms. Most recently, he was commissioned with leading a government-sponsored school improvement project.

3. Mr. Fahd

The participant holds a senior policy position in the government of the UAE. His role has direct impact on public and private sector educational institutions. He has an extensive experience in government regulatory authorities as a leader and strategy expert, with a track record of strategic projects impacting the launch, continuity and execution of operations of the educational institutions in the UAE.

4. Ms. Bana

The participant is a Senior Manager for Arabic provision in a prominent educational company in the UAE and globally. Her role includes improving Arabic teaching and learning and developing resources and professional development for teachers and heads of departments.

She has been working for more than 12 years with the public and private sectors in the Arab Region on areas related to evidence-based policy reform, school-based improvement, and capacity building for teachers and school leaders.

5. Ms. Dana

The participant is an established educational leader with more than 17 years of experience in teaching combined with senior positions of principalship in the UAE, Jordan and London, UK. Currently she is the principal of a school belonging to a network of international private schools, and an advisor to the network on the teaching of the Arabic language. She has a track record of successfully building the capacity of Arabic language teachers in her school and achieving significant improvements in key inspection indicators during a short time frame. She holds

graduate qualifications in educational leadership from the IOE (University College London) and currently working towards an Ed.D at the same college.

6. Ms. Martha

The participant is an education-technology leader with more than 25 years of experience in developing and leading innovative enterprises in research and development of software and information industry. She has also been in senior posts in renowned technology gurus as CDO and VP. She is currently the CEO of a global language company in the UAE, dedicated to fostering language development and literacy internationally. Her company provides a range of standardized language assessments. Most recently, she developed benchmark tests in Arabic language as L1, with the purpose of evaluating program effectiveness and assessing students' achievements. Her assessment tools also include tests to support English, Chinese and Spanish L1 learners.

7. Dr. Sandra

The participant has taught Arabic language, modern Arabic literature, translation studies in a number of universities in the UK. She has published a number of books and journal articles on aspects of Arabic Language, Translation Studies and modern Arabic literature. She is currently teaching in one of the universities in UAE.

8. Dr. Sandy

The participant is the director of a prominent philanthropic organization concerned with policy research and community development in the UAE. She has extensive international and Gulf region research experience in issues related to policy and education. She previously held senior leadership posts in governmental institutions in the UAE focused on governance and educational policy. She is an acting member on a number of key regional and international education councils.

9. Mr. Marwan

The participant is the Arabic language program director at a well-established and renowned K-12 international school in Dubai. The participant has worked as an Arabic language consultant, curriculum developer, literacy coach and teacher trainer for various independent and governmental organizations in the Arab region and the Middle East.

10. Ms. Ilham

The participant is the head of the Arabic language department at an international school in the UAE. She has extensive experience in Arabic language curriculum design and development. She has a record of published children's literature in Arabic. She developed the standard-based Arabic language curricula in a number of institutions based on authentic literature. She is the co-author of Arabic language textbooks that are used nationally and regionally. She is an award winner of the Mohammed Bin Rashed Arabic language award for her work on an approach for motivating children to read.

11. Dr. Suad

The participant is an assistant professor in the college of education at a prominent university in the UAE. She has a portfolio of research with key interests in curriculum development and teacher professional learning. She has wide expertise in the areas of international education, teacher professional development, and Arabic and Islamic education teaching and learning. Her career trajectory is rich and varied, moving from a practitioner's role regionally as a teacher, teacher trainer, and educational leader at many levels, to academia.

12. Dr. Ahmad

The participant is a head of the Arabic department for L1 learners in an established private school in Dubai. He is a doctorate holder in the Arabic language, with MA level qualifications in translation, business management and Islamic studies. He has experience in designing professional development in the areas language acquisition, language editing, and preparation of teachers of the Arabic language. He has an extensive experience in teaching in K-12 levels as well as graduate university levels in the UAE. He also contributed to the development of a linguistics curriculum in the Arabic language at an international standard that is currently implemented in more than 80 universities internationally.

13. Dr. Nasma

The participant is currently a senior member of the leadership team at the college of education of a prominent university in the UAE. She has a strong and varied teaching experience with particular expertise in curriculum and instructional design. She is a dedicated researcher and frequent guest speaker and participant in national and international conferences with an established publication record in top-tier peer-reviewed journals. Her research interests fall within the realm of using technology in learning, the impact of technology integration on the classroom and the design of student-centered learning environments.

14. Dr. Samer

The participant is currently the Assistant chair of the Arabic Department of a prominent university in the UAE. He earned his Ph.D from the University of Jordan, with extensive experience in teaching at a number of Jordanian universities. His research interests include curriculum and instruction theories, Queer theory in education, discourse analysis, postmodernism, and teaching of the Arabic language.

15. Ms. Inas

The participant is an educational practitioner and trainer in the Arabic language teaching and learning. She is a certified international trainer supporting a range of International curriculum schools. She specifically supports Arabic teachers in the UAE and the wider gulf region. She is also an experienced curriculum analyst and designer.

16. Dr. Peter

The participant is the director general of a prominent regional philanthropic organization, with Arabic language academic expertise. He is a professor and a published author. The organization that he directs is concerned with advancing the

Arabic language and culture across many countries in the Arab speaking region. This NGO is responsible for educational, Arabic language and culture projects involving publication of relevant books and organizing high-level annual regional conferences.

17. Ms. Ghaby

The participant is an experienced educationalist with an extensive experience as an educational leader and policy senior official, working in the private and public sector in the areas of quality assurance and educational improvement. In her capacity, she has been leading critical projects that impact and mobilize teachers, school leaders and regulatory entities in the UAE. For example, she has been a lead participant in the Arabic teachers' assessment process at one of the UAE regulatory authorities.

18. Mr. Adam

The participant is published author of pedagogical books and dictionaries. He has extensive teaching and leadership experience in IB curriculum schools across the GCC region, particularly in the UAE. His expertise in the 3 IBO programs as a coordinator and authorized trainer qualified him to hold senior leadership posts in the school where he currently works. He advises on a number of local and regional projects related to the Arabic language teaching, learning and assessment.

19. Dr. Reema

The participant is a senior official at a government regulatory entity in the UAE. She has extensive experience in education as a practitioner as well as a regulator. She is particularly experienced in assessments and strategic planning and operationalization of outcomes for students, with particular emphasis on Arabic language outcomes. She has quality assurance experience in the private and public sector. Her work has impact on students' exit qualifications and curriculum planning in the public-school system in the UAE.

20. Dr. Salma

The participant is a highly experienced international educator with a record of published academic work on the Arabic language, with a strong professional affiliation in senior posts with the IBO, NEASC, and CIS. As a veteran educator, she served in leadership and principalship positions in both the public and private sectors, and launched the early international school in the Arab speaking countries region, in addition to her many senior positions in the UAE, Kuwait and Jordan.

21. Mr. Mohammed Adli

The participant is an educational practitioner and trainer in various educational fields. He is a certified international trainer supporting a range of International curriculum schools. He specifically supports Arabic teaching and learning regionally and internationally. He is an established children's literature and a published author in Arabic.

22. Mr. Tarek

The participant currently holds a senior advisory post at an education authority in the UAE, spearheading projects with impact on curricula in the public-school sector. He

has extensive experience in training, school evaluations and consultancy, with particular focus on literacy curriculum design.

23. Dr. Feryal

The participant is a senior advisor to policy makers in the UAE. She is a researcher, an academic, and a policy practitioner. She advised on several country wide educational reform initiatives, that entailed modernization of the Arabic curricula nationwide. Her work is focused on the public sector, while sometimes part of the outcomes of her work are adopted in the private sector in the UAE and the region.

24. Ms. Ola

The participant has a track record of more than 30 years in the field of education in the UAE in the capacity as teacher, vice principal and principal. Currently, she is a pedagogical consultant and curriculum developer, whose main focus is supporting teachers and improving their pedagogy. She has worked with a group of colleagues on developing a framework for teaching Arabic as a foreign language, relying on US, European standards and Ministry of Education standards. She also has expertise in school inspections and has practiced in a number of the Emirates in the UAE.

25. Ms. Amna

The participant is head of the Arabic language department at an international school in the UAE. She has experience in Arabic language curriculum development. She established effective and globally relevant practices, working with her team to ensure use of a wide range of formative assessment strategies and tools, to inform instruction and support student learning.

26. Ms. Mariam

The participant is a poet, author of literary studies and researcher in local and regional Arabic literature, analysis and criticism. She currently holds a position at the Ministry of Culture in the UAE. She is a committed board member in a number of local cultural councils. She presents workshops in reading and Arabic language for children and young adults.

27. Mr. Majed

The participant currently holds a senior post in a government entity that is involved in monitoring the quality of education in the UAE. His work focuses on regulating language practices. He has a rich linguistic background and experience and speaks 4 languages. He taught English as a first language and Arabic as an additional language for a good number of years in Arab speaking countries. He has experience as a course book editor for a number of publishers for additional language learners. As part of his role, he performed several action research studies for development and policy making purposes on teaching and learning of Arabic as L1.

28. Dr. Rabab

The participant is a children's literature author who has 180 books for children in her portfolio. She founded a well known publishing house that produces all her work. The publishing house provides an integrated curriculum for teaching Arabic for kindergarten, for Arabic speakers and other languages. It also produces enriching tools and materials such as educational games to support the literature readers.

29. Ms. Lina

The participant is an experienced content developer and publisher of Arabic children's literature. She worked for many years in the UAE at a number of renowned publishing houses, with responsibilities that ranged from Arabic content writing to managing initiatives such as teacher training on use of resources. In her current capacity as a project planner and children's literature author at an international publishing house, she developed a network of working relationships with locally and regionally based boards for authors, publishers and writing awards. She was directly involved in developing digital content for one of the Arabic language initiatives in the Emirate of Sharjah.

APPENDIX F

DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF TEXTS

Excerpts taken from mission, aims and objectives statements
of a selected number of *Arabic language initiatives (ALI)*

The 4 identified *Problematizations* (color coded in the text as follows):

1. Concern about Arab nationalism and the identity of the UAE
2. Challenges facing Arabic language teaching and learning
3. Arabic language prospects for modernity and the need to develop Arabic as a language for the future
4. Prevalence of the English language and the status of the Arabic language among other languages

Questions used for guiding this section of discourse analysis (Goodwin, 2009):

- Analyze the expressed concern about the Arabic language in ALI
- Are there articulated causes of the weakening of Arabic in ALI?
- Comment on the coherence of all the ALI texts and how they relate to one another, with logical and consistent use of terminology / discursive coherence.
- What discursive devices were used to for the text of these ALI to make sense?
- The proposals advanced to address the weakening of the Arabic language are significant because they gave a particular shape to the situation of Arabic. The policy makers are creating particular ways for understanding the issue of Arabic (Goodwin, 2009). How can this be traced in the ALI texts?

A	Excerpts copied from mission, aims and objectives statements of ALI
ALI-1	<p>Arabic language charter- press release (Emirates24/7, 2012)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Underlining the 2,000-year heritage of Arabic, Sheikh Mohammed said that a focus on nurturing the language is important to uphold the Emirati national identity for future generations. • "Our national identity is integrally linked to the Arabic language, which serves as an effective medium to express our values, culture and heritage. Promoting the language will enable our future generations to connect with our roots, society and values more effectively," said Sheikh Mohammed. • He announced wide ranging initiatives to promote the use of Arabic including the setting up of an Arabic Language Charter and the formation of an international committee of experts to promote Arabic as the language of science and technology. • He said that an Advisory Council, headed by the Minister of Culture, will implement the new Arabic Language Charter. The objective of the Charter is to protect the essence of the language and enhance its usage. • The international committee of experts to revive Arabic as the language of science and technology will be headed by Dr. Farouk El Baz. The committee

	will recommend strategies to modernise scientific learning methods through Arabic that will benefit people across the Arab world.
ALI-2	<p>Arabic for Life (Arabic for Life, 2014)</p> <p>تم إعلان تشكيل لجنة تحديث تعليم اللغة العربية بتوجيهات كريمة من صاحب السمو الشيخ محمد بن راشد آل مكتوم وجاء الإعلان ضمن منظومة متكاملة من المبادرات الهادفة إلى تعزيز مكانة اللغة العربية في دولة الإمارات العربية المتحدة إلى تكريس رؤية الإمارات 2021 التي تهدف إلى جعل دولة الإمارات مركزاً للامتياز في اللغة العربية باعتبارها أداة رئيسية لتعزيز الهوية الوطنية لدى الأجيال القادمة.</p> <p>وتعد لجنة تحديث تعليم اللغة العربية مبادرة لوضع تصور حديث في تعلم اللغة العربية وتعليمها.</p> <p>التمهيد</p> <p>وتعتبر هذه الخطوة إحدى المبادرات التي يراها سموه لإحداث تغيير نوعي في مجالات عدة تتعلق بالتعليم والإعلام والترجمة على حد سواء بني هذا التقرير على عدة أسس أهمها الأصالة التي تدفع للتحديث والتطوير، والتمسك بالتقاليد والمقاربة العملية والبعد عن التنظير قدر ما أمكن، مع أخذ التحديات التي تواجه تعليم اللغة العربية في الاعتبار.</p>
ALI-3	<p>Arabic Reading Challenge (Arabic Reading Challenge, 2019)</p> <p>Raise awareness of the importance of reading among students and youth in the Arab World.</p> <p>Improve Arabic language skills, including fluency and eloquence in Arabic speech.</p> <p>Develop self-learning, analytical and critical thinking.</p> <p>Skills, and broaden understanding and comprehension. Develop emotional and intellectual intelligence.</p> <p>Promote cultural awareness among students.</p> <p>Build a network of young Arab readers and facilitate the communication between them to build Arab cultural gatherings.</p> <p>Promote patriotism and Arabism, and the feeling of belonging to one nation</p>
ALI-4	<p>Arabic Award (MBR Global Initiatives, 2019)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To establish the position of the UAE as a center of excellence in Arabic language. Upgrading the Arabic language and encouraging initiatives that contribute to the development of education, education planning, thought and use. Highlighting and honoring successful initiatives in different categories of the Award to enable Arabic language workforces to benefit from them. Raising awareness of the importance of personal and institutional initiatives to develop the Arabic language. Encourage young people and motivate them to innovate in the development of the various uses of Arabic language. Expanding the Arabization of works from different fields of knowledge to benefit from the experiences of world cultures. Raise awareness that the Arabic language is the language of the future, and work to crystallize this role and goal in reality.
ALI-5	<p>اعتماد اللغة العربية في كافة المراسلات الحكومية (Emaratallyoum 2008)</p> <p>إعتماد اللغة العربية كلغة رسمية في جميع المؤسسات والهيئات الاتحادية في كافة إمارات الدولة ، وتشكيل مجلس التنسيق والتكامل التعليمي على مستوى الدولة.</p> <p>ويأتي هذا الاجراء لينهي حالة من الجدل أثارها استخدام اللغة الإنجليزية في عدد كبير من الوزارات والمؤسسات الحكومية العاملة بالإمارات. إذ يواجه المتعاملون فيها خاصة العرب منهم صعوبة فهم المراسلات التي يتلقونها في أعمالهم.</p> <p>ذكر أن الكثير من كتاب الصحف طالبوا بضرورة الحد من استخدام اللغة الانجليزية في المؤسسات الحكومية واعتماد اللغة العربية كلغة في المكاتب ، وتعزيز جهود مؤسسات المجتمع المختلفة للمحافظة على اللغة العربية والعناية بتوظيفها واستخدامها في الملتقيات والمؤتمرات وجميع المحافل، بحيث تكون هي اللغة الأولى.</p>
ALI-6	<p>Arabic Language Academy in Sharjah (Arabic Language Academy, 2016)</p> <p>يصلُ مجمع اللغة العربيّة بالشارقة إلى تحقيق رؤيته وأهدافه من خلال:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> رعاية الأعمال البحثيّة والمشاريع العلميّة المتعلّقة باللّغة العربيّة.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● رعاية برامج تسهيل تعلّم اللغة العربية، وتحفيز النّشء على التعامل بها، والإبداع في فنونها وأجناسها الأدبية ● الإشراف والتخطيط والرّعاية المادّيّة لإنجاز المعجم التاريخي للغة العربيّة. ● النهضة بالجانب المصطلحي وتهذيبه، والإشراف على إصدار قواميس ومعالج لغوية عصريّة تلبيّ حاجيات المتحدّث باللّغة الفصيحة والكاتب بها في العصر الحديث. ● مدّ جسور التّعاون، وتنسيق الجهود مع الجامعات اللّغوية والعلميّة في عالمنا العربي والإسلامي للوصول إلى مخرجات معرفيّة هادفة وواعدة. ● التّواصل مع رجالات الفكر واللغة والثّقافة والأدب والعلوم الإنسانيّة في شتّى دول العالم. ● المشاركة الفاعلة في إعداد وإنشاء برامج إدماج اللغة العربية في البحث التكنولوجي المعاصر، والإفادة من مفرزات الانفجار المعلوماتي لخدمة اللغة العربية، وتعميم التّخاطب بها مشافهة وكتابة. ● رعاية الدراسات العلميّة التي تتناول تاريخ الأمة العربية وحضارتها وصلتها بالحضارات الأخرى. ● رعاية المشاريع العلميّة المتعلقة بتحقيق المخطوطات اللّغوية والتراثيّة. ● رعاية جوائز دوليّة في خدمة اللغة العربية.
ALI-7	<p>Arabic digital content (tra.gov.ae, 2016)</p> <p>TRA Launches the First Report for the Arabic Digital Content</p> <p>Sunday, 27 November 2016</p> <p>The Telecommunications Regulatory Authority announced launching the process to issue the first comprehensive report that addresses the situation and the prospects of the Arabic Digital Content, with the support of the Information & Communication Technology Fund (ICT Fund), in cooperation with several international, regional and national entities.</p> <p>On this strategic project, H.E Hamad Obaid Al Mansoori, Director General of TRA, said: 'The project is in line with the wise directives of H.H Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, UAE Vice President and Prime Minister and Ruler of Dubai, as he indicates that the UAE has the qualifications to be the capital of culture, reading, knowledge, and content. This project comes within a series of important UAE initiatives in the field of supporting the Arabic Content, such as the Year of Reading initiative, the Arab Reading Challenge, and the National Reading Strategy. It also comes in the context of the UAE's leading position in the community and economy of Digital knowledge.'</p> <p>The report addresses the current situation of the Arabic Digital Content, the relevant opportunities and challenges, the global trends in the development of digital content, the needed priorities, as well as indicators to measure the level of development in supporting the Arabic Digital Content. It also contains a section on the investment dimension of the Arabic Digital Content, and its position within the digital knowledge economy mechanisms.</p> <p>The report aims to provide a main reference for academic entities as well as the government entities, decision makers and researchers, supporting their efforts to develop strategies related to the Arabic Digital Content. It also aims to enhance the position of the UAE as the capital of content, motivating the relevant Arab institutions to coordinate efforts, in addition to shedding light on the achievements of different Arab institutions in the various aspects of digital content development.</p>
ALI-8	<p>UAE National law of reading</p> <p>In an unprecedented, civilised and legislative gesture for the region, President His Highness Sheikh Khalifa Bin Zayed Al Nahyan issued the first-ever National Law of Reading, that sets legislative frameworks, executive programmes and specific government responsibilities to establish the value of reading in the UAE. The law aims to support human resources development and contribute to building mental and cognitive capabilities, while support national intellectual production and build knowledge-based societies in the country. The law will institutionalise all efforts to</p>

	<p>enhance reading in the community, said Sheikh Khalifa, while confirming that it aims to invest in humans and establish the UAE's image as an inspirational model in the region. "Our goal is to prepare generations which work towards excelling and achieving the vision of the UAE, which since its inception, has recognised the importance of knowledge, science and culture, and harnessed them in the best interests of the homeland and the Emiratis," Sheikh Khalifa said.</p> <p>While expressing his pride at the law, Vice President, Prime Minister and Ruler of Dubai His Highness Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum said, "The law has the same cultural value as reading, and transforms it to an integrated government project." He also celebrated the imposition of the law at his office in Emirates Towers in the presence of a number of winners of the Arabic Reading Challenge in the UAE. "While drafting the law, we depended on international legal experiences bearing in mind that its articles would reflect our local heritage and Arab identity," Sheikh Mohammed said. Sheikh Mohammed emphasised that reading is the right of all members of society and guaranteed by law since early childhood. The law, the first legislation of its kind, obliges the government to intervene early to enhance reading through provision of a knowledge bag for new-borns and children, he added. "We seek to promote reading and knowledge in schools, universities, foundations, homes and across the state," he noted. "Our goal is to make reading a daily habit for the people and competent institutions should translate the law into reality," he also indicated. The law acquires exceptional importance as a comprehensive law on the national level. It highlights the country and its leadership's interest in human development, and to develop the cultural assets of its citizens in order to prepare and rehabilitate well educated generations that are able to establish intellectual Emirati legacy, which would enable the country to occupy a prominent position among the economies of knowledge-based countries.</p>
ALI-9	Lughati
	<p>The purpose of the educational programme is to improve the educational system and provide students with the necessary skills to use the modern technological tools in Arabic. It also seeks to preserve and protect the Arabic language, increasing its usage and students' proficiency, through modern and scientific means.</p> <p>UAE's leadership continuously seeks to support educational initiatives in general and the Arabic language in particular, in order to provide modern tools in educational programs that not only work by connecting the children with the syllabus but also motivates them to think scientifically and access information they need.</p>
ALI-10	Bil Arabi
	<p>Objective: The initiative is keen to celebrate Arabic Language on its international day by encouraging using exclusively the Arabic language in all social media: Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram throughout the Arabic Language Day. The initiative focuses on providing a variety of activities covering most of the digital media channels and social media and spreading awareness of the beauty of the Arabic language and its treasures, which are linked to our heritage and authentic Arab history.</p>

APPENDIX G

INTERVIEW CODES

Participant name	Interview number	Interview date
Adam	N1	20-06-2019
Ahmad	N2	09-05-2019
Amna	N3	15-06-2019
Bana	N4	22-05-2019
Dana	N5	15-05-2019
Elham	N6	02-06-2019
Fahad	N7	11-06-2019
Feryal	N8	09-05-2019
Gaby	N9	26-05-2019
Inas	N10	01-06-2019
Lina	N11	24-06-2019
Majed	N12	19-06-2019
Mariam	N13	19-06-2019
Martha	N14	02-05-2019
Marwan	N15	06-05-2019
Mohammed	N16	01-06-2019
Nasma	N17	05-05-2019
Ola	N18	26-06-2019
Peter	N19	22-07-2019
Rabab	N20	22-06-2019
Raya	N21	11-04-2019
Reema	N22	05-06-2019
Salma	N23	13-06-2019
Samer	N24	23-05-2019
Sandra	N25	08-05-2019
Sandy	N26	06-06-2019
Suad	N27	02-07-2019
Ziad	N28	04-04-2019
Tarek	N29	04-06-2019

APPENDIX H

SAMPLE CODING SHEETS OF 2 INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS

1) Coding Sheet: Gaby (cited in body of report as N9)

Date & Place of Interview: Dubai, 26th May 2019 (12:00 1:00 pm)

Introductory	THEMES	CODES
<p>d. How would you describe the status of the Arabic language in the UAE?</p> <p>Q1 (main)</p> <p>What is your view of the current and most recent L1 Arabic language initiatives of the UAE?</p> <p>e. Do you think that it is significant that most of these initiatives are introduced by the HRH Mohammad bin Rashid?</p> <p>f. What has been your role in relation to these initiatives?</p>		
<p>It's a complicated, multifaceted question, or answer actually. One thing to set thing straight (for me), you know, my opinion and my readings, the benchmarking التي عملناها the status of Arabic is not unique to the UAE. This is a, whatever the status is, let's call it a dilemma, let's call it the weakness, let's call it the state it is, it's all over. Maybe in the UAE it is a bit more pronounced because of the make up of the population, and that English is more commonly used outside the norm of the house and school, more or less.</p> <p>But Arabic across the region does not hold its place anymore as a 'first language or native language status'. With us, I think there's a problem here when we go to schools when we inspect schools when we collect data about students, even that there is something internationally, they ask us, is he a native speaker? There's no such thing anymore, or very few or dwindling in numbers. What does it mean a native speaker in Arabic? Only Arabic is spoken at home? This is something that's becoming a rarity, ما في ما في. Either because of the makeup of the 'nanny' present or the parents are becoming more educated middle class so they're speaking English more, so even that needs re-defining. Every Arab person or a child now is a dilemma because even if they speak Arabic at home, it's in a dialect that is not the same as they would go and study at school. So هون في as if he is learning a completely different language.</p> <p>I just want to add 2 points. One point is just because we're talking about the state of Arabic. The state of Arabic is more so dwindling, cannot be used on an everyday level, you know...etc. Is because (also) children are not being exposed to it beyond the 40 minutes of Arabic lesson that he or she is exposed to during a school day. We rarely have cartoons in Arabic or publications or anything that caters to very young readers. مش عمقول ما في but it's not as attractive, we don't use it as much, it's not embedded in our everyday life. Maybe the state of Arabic as a dialect is in a better state than the state of Arabic as a classical, in its standard form, yeh MSA, usedor the communication skills of students, whether in writing or speaking using a standard Arabic.</p> <p>View of ALI?</p> <p>These are all very good initiatives. ما عمقول لا but where in the world do students learn native language through initiatives?!!</p> <p>Initiatives are not enough! Initiatives are a bi-product of what is not happening either at home or at school, ok? Reading ok, (maybe) universally, reading is dwindling as an index, everyone was doing something it as an initiative, but to cater for the Arabic language in the broader sense, ok whose catering to the English language or to the French language, ah this is something I had to say before and (now I remembered when I mentioned the French) هو هيدا ما بيمننا مثل ما بيقلوا</p>	<p>Based on some benchmarking work that the participants' team has done and from personal opinion, the status of Arabic is not unique to the UAE.</p> <p>Issues with Arabic are more visible in the UAE because of the nature of the population and the prevalence of English.</p> <p>The 'native' speaker or L1 speaker needs to be re-defined in the context of this country and the region in general.</p> <p>Arabic is not being used for daily communicative purposes any more.</p> <p>The regulation of time allocation does not support effective teaching of Arabic.</p> <p>ALI are effective initiatives, but initiatives are not enough.</p> <p>Arabic is not the only language that's in a critical situation (e.g. the French language), every language apart from English is dwindling.</p> <p>The issue of bilingualism is affecting the speakership of Arabic, and this is linked to socio-economic class.</p>	<p>Context/ issues with Arabic</p> <p>Culture</p> <p>Regulation</p> <p>Global context/ issues</p> <p>Cultural issues</p>

<p>(but) the state of the Arabic language is not a good place, I think a lot of languages are not in a good place, so English is becoming the new 'speak', (you know 1984?) and everyone uses, and every other language is dwindling, (maybe) on purpose or not on purpose, هل يقمن أنا عم حيد they're doing it on purpose.</p> <p>Me: whose doing it on purpose?</p> <p>I don't want to go into a conspiracy theory, now it's more and more, if you only speak a language you are uneducated. That's a global issue. And if you are a middle class well to do person, and you speak a language that is also not trendy, not fashionable, (you know?) what is the other language that is most desired? It's English taking over.</p> <p>Now to go back to the initiatives, these are good initiatives, they keep people...how do we say...they keep them aware, interested, they want to do things, but (back) to the core questions, what's wrong with the Arabic language? Reproductive skills, communication skills, they're weak, the initiatives like these don't address the weaknesses, you have reading, writing, speaking....</p> <p>MBR significant...?</p> <p>Yeah yes, it is very notable, maybe some by Sh. Sultan, and some in Abu Dhabi, but they are overwhelmingly by Sh. MBR, not only in the UAE, but also, the Arabic reading challenge, on the regional level, it's only the UAE is doing something, maybe because of the situation now, maybe because other countries are politically not stable, this is now not a priority, it could be that...it could be (she paused).</p> <p>Me: what significance is it that he is sponsoring these initiatives?</p> <p>Her: It is international and local and regional, but this is a personal thing, because he personally is a writer, he is a poet, he wants to preserve his native language (ما بتعرفي) maybe after Sh. MBR these initiatives might not go on.</p> <p>Have you had any role?</p> <p>We help a little bit in the تحدي القراءة in measuring it, the المعايير from the MoE point of view, I was in a committee, (bit by bit) I understand though (with pauses), that the way to measure it has become more quantitative than qualitative, ok? It's how many books and how many people..(again), maybe because of the volume, qualitatively to measure this it's really a big task.</p> <p>To a certain extent, I'm in and out in a committee, we're working on EMSAT (العربي) criteria إنو شو ال المستعمل, it's not a black and white issue, you're testing Arabic, do you know how many levels of Arabic there are out there?! Even within...people think it is less (....) in public schools, even in public schools the capacity or the ability or the starting point of children vary because it depends on their background (meaning) those who are very rich and have the nannies and at home they speak English, even when they are in public schools عربيتهم مش and even those who are in the rural areas, their Arabic is not very good because they speak dialect, الفصحى, maybe you have to come from a certain background where a parent read to their children in (standard Arabic) to be ready at that level. وناهيك عن المدارس الخاصة where you have our children they're all over the place, my daughters your daughters, and then it's also not fair to expect of them a level of Arabic that is first language, and they're only exposed to it for 40 minutes a day. Inti you don't speak to them standard Arabic, you talk to them in Lebanese, (and me too), can you imagine? These are 3 different languages.</p>	<p>Leadership support is significant, locally and regionally.</p> <p>The UAE is the only country that is actually doing something, because other places may be less politically stable. MBR is personally a writer, and these ALI are a product of his personal interests as well.</p> <p>An indirect role in helping out occasionally at the Ministry level with the team of Arabic reading challenge, through looking at the learning standards.</p> <p>The reading challenge monitoring process is more quantitative than qualitative.</p> <p>There are issues in identifying the starting points of L1 learners even in public schools, to align the quality of the national tests.</p>	<p>Context/ political</p> <p>T&L regulatory context.</p>
<p><u>Framing the status of the Arabic language for L1 (problematization)</u> <u>Q2 (main)</u></p> <p>Looking at the ALI and the way they were presented as a range of initiatives, charter, projects..., what do they tell you about the status of the teaching and/or learning of the MSA for L1 learners?</p> <p>(i.e. how is the status of Arabic L1 perceived through these ALI?)</p> <p>b. How does the view of the authorities, as reflected in these initiatives, compare to your view of the status of Arabic language for L1 learners? and do the general public see it the same way?</p>		

<p>I'm thinking on the spot a bit. Are you asking what they tell about the status of Arabic?</p> <p>They are not awarding, these awards and initiatives, what's happening in the classroom, they're awarding individuals, alone and their efforts, like the reading challenge, (it has nothing to do with what's happening) but the outcome of it to get the award has nothing to do with what's happening in the classroom. You on an individual basis, Amani... (Gaby) what have you, (you distinguish). All these initiatives tell me I don't know if the status is the right word...uhhhh because the status ايه واطية، (التنازع) عالي بس it's not where it should be but all these initiatives (are to support it).</p> <p>How does the view of authorities compare to your view....?</p> <p>I think we're all aligned, (it wouldn't have been the case) you wouldn't have had so many initiatives to support the Arabic language if the powers to be and the decision makers did not see that there's a problem. Which every educational entity here from the various sources that we have, we know that Arabic is a problem and it's a problem for many many reasons. (also) at the very beginning I forgot to talk about the important factor which is teacher training and teacher capacity and the curricula.</p>	<p>ALI are not rewarding what is happening in the classrooms (T&L), but they are rewarding individuals, referring to the Reading challenge.</p> <p>The status of Arabic is in a good position but the outcomes of students are low, and all these initiatives are to support.</p> <p>Authorities views align with the reality. They realize that there's a problem.</p>	<p>RQ1</p> <p>Context</p> <p>Assumptions</p>
<p><u>Wider Context</u></p> <p>Q3 (main)</p> <p>The Arab speaking countries have witnessed different approaches by governmental and non-governmental entities to address the teaching and learning of Arabic as a mother tongue.</p> <p>d. What initiatives in other Arabic speaking countries are you aware of?</p> <p>e. What are your opinions of these initiatives?</p> <p>f. How do they compare to those of the UAE?</p>		
<p>You know...now on the spot no. But (look) not initiatives but maybe purposeful planning of the curriculum, ok (meaning) بس هيدي سيف ذو حدين for example countries like Syria, (for example, talking in the past) curriculum was (all in Arabic), Jordan, approximately, (talking public schools, they are strong in Arabic) (no one can dispute that). On the other hand they are not very marketable, because they don't have that other language, you know? Some things got to give (as they say).</p> <p>(I don't know if it's right moment to raise it) great efforts to improve the curriculum. (and make it more literature based, but maybe, I forgot to mention it for a while and we spoke about it before, I've always said, يمكن أكثر ناس بيضروا اللغة العربية هي أكثر ناس بيدافعوا عن اللغة العربية عقائدية دينية، مثلاً، لأسباب من لغوية مثلاً (الكتابة الإبداعية) ما هي بحد ذاتها (الكتابة الإبداعية) أو إذا بدك تولفي قصة أو تكتب قصة أو تقرأ قصة يللي هي خارج عن المألوف المجتمع مرات و(الناس) يمكن يمكن في عشو بدو يقرأك؟ you limit it, you limit writers, readers, anybody initiating this, khalas, ok? Tab el young reader (he already read the historical figures, he read the religious figures, and he read....and then what?)</p> <p>What is attracting people outside? (he wants something that relates to him, they associate with, something that is relevant) (I'm saying here that this is beginning in the Arabic language curriculum, infiltration of literature-based teaching and learning. The vision of it, maybe when you speak to Dr. Latifa she would tell you the vision is fully immersed up to grade 9, literature based 100%. She quotes for you the IB curriculum, very literature based, (and the philosophy and so on; but she knows that this is going to be a long journey). (went on detailing incidents of people reacting to literature in UAE textbooks) (Now even if the curriculum people know what's wrong and are trying to make changes, there are things that you need to approach slowly, so that people can assimilate).</p>	<p>Other Arab countries do not have similar initiatives as the UAE. But they have purposeful planning of the curriculum.</p> <p>Countries where the learners have stronger outcomes in Arabic, they are less competent in the other language.</p> <p>UAE is witnessing strong efforts to improve the curriculum, to become more literature based.</p> <p>Decision makers who defend Arabic the most are the ones that are harming it the most, and this is linked to their ideological beliefs and how it is used in their choice of literature in the curriculum.</p> <p>The approach to curriculum development is long term but it started in the UAE.</p>	<p>Wider context</p> <p>UAE context of curriculum RQ2</p> <p>Regulatory context</p>
<p><u>Other approaches</u></p> <p>Q4 (main)</p> <p>Do you feel there is something about the situation of Arabic as L1 that is not being discussed but which we should be discussing?</p>		

<p>In your opinion, what else can be done to improve the use of the (MSA) the Arabic language as an L1?</p> <p>Do you think there are other ways of seeing the situation of L1 Arabic?</p> <p>e. What do you think influences L1 learners in their choice to use MSA?</p> <p>f. What is your opinion of the Arabic reading challenge?</p> <p>g. Do you feel that the Arabic reading challenge has had an impact? why? /or why not?</p> <p>h. To what extent have the ALI changed the Arabic-speaking public's perceptions of the Arabic language?</p>		
<p>لنحل المشكلة بعدة طرق أو We need to work on teachers, how to train them, how to...(maybe) our biggest problem and you're the (most knowledgeable) is that our teachers themselves don't understand language acquisition. (They are good in Arabic as a language, but they don't know how to teach it, they don't know the expectation). This is one.</p> <p>There is an added problem here (a bit) in the UAE (I don't blame them) but an added problem that (3/4 of our Arabic teachers in private schools, and to a certain extent, public schools, we are importing) even here in the UAE, you do something about teacher preparation, pre-service training in the universities, but 70% of your teachers are coming from Egypt and Jordan and even from Lebanon, (who have studied Arabic literature, not Arabic pedagogy).</p> <p>What influences learners in speaking MSA? Outside the context of the classroom? I think it is the teachers' fault as well. The teachers (we have just mentioned it) how many times they would be in a class and they're not pretending, they're really like this, how many times have you spoken MSA and (shame on you if you make an error) in conjugating one verb or of missing an annotation at the end of a word!! You give up eventually.... I know grammar is important, I'm not saying no, but if you keep correcting my every other word, as a student, I'm discouraged, leave me alone!!.</p> <p>What is your opinion of the Arabic reading challenge? I think it has put Arabic on the map, regionally, I don't know how international it is. Btw, it is even growing, (there are Arabs, living abroad) they want to participate. It is very encouraging. Sh. MB always does things on a big scale, it's a prestigious award, and to be fair the criteria for choosing is not only quantitative, it's a big process of elimination (معايير كثيرة) وكل واحد يخضع لـ (معايير كثيرة) (at the end of the day) it is based on a few individuals who are enthusiastic. You know, It's not on mass, not on mass because something is wrong with the initiative. (on the contrary) like any award, it is not catered to the millions.</p> <p>To what extent has this changed view of public? Definitely positively, but it remains superficial. It is an award (the reading challenge and the 'dignity of the Arabs') and it is a language for our identity. Of course it is and we wanted that. We encourage it but it's not enough.</p>	<p>The solutions that we know about are one dimensional, not multifaceted, to address a complicated situation.</p> <p>Teachers need to be trained effectively.</p> <p>The majority of teachers do not have the relevant university level preparation.</p> <p>The choice of learners to speak Arabic is linked to the issues with T&L that they experience.</p> <p>Arabic reading challenge is effectively growing beyond the UAE. It engaged learners in reading.</p> <p>However, it is not catered to the millions, only for those who participate.</p> <p>ALI have changed the public's view of the Arabic language positively, and empowered them by boosting the national identity.</p>	<p>RQ1</p> <p>Next steps</p> <p>Context/ T&L</p> <p>RQ1</p> <p>RQ1</p> <p>RQ1</p>
<p><u>Impact of ALI</u></p> <p>Q5 (main)</p> <p>In your opinion, what do you think the impact of these ALI on:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers of Arabic as L1? Learners of Arabic as L1? Curriculum for teaching Arabic as L1? Pedagogy for teaching Arabic as L1? <p>Q5: To what extent are people influenced by popular discussions about L1 Arabic, e.g. in the media? What are the effects of these initiatives of the UAE on other Arab speaking countries in the region?</p>		
<p>In terms of implications for students, up until a certain age, we are seeing more movement in the schools to check out more books, read</p>	<p>Impact of schools was seen through the dynamic of increasing</p>	<p>RQ2</p>

<p>more books, read more books, log in more books, because of the reading challenge, and so on. So definitely (there is some dynamic). Libraries are becoming more of a (where they are available) of a place where....actually you can see from the log of the library that it (is registering some active circulation).</p> <p>Are teachers and school administrators tying the initiatives with what they're doing with the Arabic language as a subject?</p> <p>Not always, sometimes there is a separation in their mind and in their action. This (reading challenge) then (we go to Arabic lessons and teach grammar) so there is a disconnect.</p> <p>Parents (for sure they encourage) but parents only do so much. Us especially as a culture, not UAE specifically, but Arabs, we are not big readers ourselves, in comparison.</p>	<p>book selections and engagement in the libraries.</p> <p>The impact on the teaching approaches were not always visible, because there is a disconnect in teachers' minds between what they think and the implementation.</p>	RQ2
<p><u>Future approaches to Arabic L1 policy</u></p> <p>Q6 (main)</p> <p>Under which conditions would the teaching and learning of the MSA by L1 learners work best?</p> <p>What types of policies would you like to see Arab governments adopting to improve the teaching and curriculum planning of Arabic for L1 learners?</p> <p>c. How do you think we could improve the way we support the teaching of Arabic?</p> <p>d. How can we develop workable approaches for the teaching and/or use of the MSA by L1 learners?</p>		
<p>My answer may shock you.</p> <p>If you want Arabic to be strong, (at least) in the primary (you have to teach all the subjects in Arabic, all of them). You can learn the other language and be very good at it when you're 11. Ok?</p> <p>Knowing, that, now (in the public system we are going in the other direction) where more and more subjects are in English. Which is going against the international trend, which says (we have to strengthen literacy when they are young). (I'm talking public system, but parents who want to enroll their kids in an international school or what have you), something is going to go, the price is going to be Arabic) forget it. Our expectations should be a bit realistic, (we should not make kids hate Arabic and impose on them, the more we impose, challenge, and make things difficult, we are not protecting the value of Arabic, but we are making it unachievable for students) we are making it impossible to achieve.</p> <p>We have a reality, and let's face it. In the public system, I'm all for the primary (to be one language to strengthen the Arabic, because this would be the repertoire) then they can carry on with another language. For international or for Arab students in international schools, ok, it's not enough that we say this is the number of hours and these are the books, and you have to!</p> <p>We need to cater and we work in partnerships with the schools, to design curricula that are adaptable. Every one...there's no way no 2 people are the same level. Let's set some people come from a background (where Arabic is strong, and there are people they are not). They're first language, yes, (but it is not even applicable, this designation), they're Arabs yes but different backgrounds, curriculum to be adapted, and tests to be adapted.</p> <p>(Now you want all people to take EMSAT, or whatever the Arabic language test is, set some bands!!)</p> <p>It's not realistic to expect everyone to achieve what is expected of a first language learner in a government school, whereby he is in gr.12 in an international school. They will not achieve it! They will always be underperforming.</p> <p>(in order not to say they are underperforming, because they're not, they are just at that level, REBRAND it, meaning, instead of saying you are weak because you got Band 2 in EMSAT, re-brand it, meaning you have Arabic A (as you mentioned earlier), make it categories Arabic A, B and C. Nothing is wrong with categorizing. It is a context and it is a reality.</p> <p>(you're not gonna point fingers at kids and say 'you are weak in Arabic'; of course they are weak in Arabic, they have spent 12 years</p>	<p>Next steps include teaching all primary level subjects in Arabic.</p> <p>The public system is going in the direction of teaching more and more subjects in English.</p> <p>Expectations from learners should be more realistic, and not end up with kids hating the Arabic language.</p> <p>What the regulation provides for international schools is not enough (number of hours and textbooks). They need more partnerships at the level of the curriculum design to address the critical issues.</p> <p>Language needs and starting points in the language need to be accounted for when designing a national exam.</p> <p>Training and PD about language acquisition.</p> <p>Stay away from the punitive approach (from a policy</p>	<p>Next steps</p> <p>Context</p> <p>Next steps</p> <p>Next steps</p> <p>Next steps</p> <p>Next steps</p> <p>Next steps</p> <p>Next steps</p>

<p>studying everything in English. What do you expect!!) (They are slightly one notch higher from the second language learner).</p> <p>How else can we support the teachers of Arabic from a policy perspective?</p> <p>Again, as I mentioned, (apart from training, and the normal things, the same old stories) (let us make people aware...first training about language acquisition) let's be very specific, and let the training be age specific or at least phase specific. When you train somebody in primary, language acquisition to improve his literacy, this is way different from teaching Gr. 9 and 10 literature, for God's Sake!!.</p> <p>Second, so far, Arabic teachers feel that whatever we are doing is very punitive. We are blaming them (all the time) and (they are coming from a background where they are not prepared and curriculum is not helping)!!</p> <p>Is it permissible for a teacher to adapt the curriculum to her students? In reality in some private schools they do it, (but if any test is given on a national level), they will be penalized!</p> <p>Let's deal with the problem from all its aspects, so that it becomes...the French have a very nice word for these languages "Langue vivante" it's not a vivant anymore, let's bring it back to life, let's make it something that is not a catastrophe for me, if I'm studying it, on the contrary let it be something I want to enjoy, if I'm learning it at my level, not being (excessively challenged).</p> <p>Some additional thoughts:</p> <p>Something we need to work on which is the assessments</p> <p>We still don't have a tool reliable valid, and (it's been going on for a while) that I can take it longitudinally and say this is producing this, to asses language capacity and language fluency, and for the adults, like the literature test which is assessing the skills that I really want them to have. Their tests are still...now in the private schools there is nothing, all are internal assessments, and (God knows whether they are effective or not, what is it assessing, content or skills; so in private schools, same marks in same level can mean 2 different things completely, there is no validity, or credibility; in government schools, tests are still content driven, more content, if you read the story then you will answer these questions, it's not about the skills if I give you a text that you haven't seen before. What would help and this is something we haven't done and should be done, is the horizontal sharing of these skills, (Arabic is not learned through the subject of Arabic per se, if a child is learning in Arabic in grade 3 how to write a paragraph, even a short paragraph, use the past tense whatever...why am I not transferring these skills and using them in social studies, in science, and even in math when he wants to present a problem, as long as we are treating subjects in silos, vertical silos, we are not transferring these skills.</p> <p>You don't learn English in an English subject, the language repertoire, you know, social studies, science, whatever...</p>	<p>perspective), because the curriculum is not a positive factor.</p> <p>Deal with the problem from all aspects. Make the language more 'learnable' and alive for students.</p> <p>Improve the quality of assessments at a national level for benchmarking purposes. We still don't have a reliable tool for Arabic.</p> <p>Teach Arabic horizontally through other subjects and avoid the silo approach.</p>	<p>Next steps</p>
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2) Coding Sheet: Tarek (cited in body of report as N29)
Date & Place of Interview: Dubai, 4th June 2019 (11:00-12:00 pm)

<p><u>Introductory</u></p> <p>g. How would you describe the status of the Arabic language in the UAE?</p> <p>Q1 (main)</p> <p>What is your view of the current and most recent L1 Arabic language initiatives of the UAE?</p> <p>h. Do you think that it is significant that most of these initiatives are introduced by the HRH Mohammad bin Rashid?</p> <p>i. What has been your role in relation to these initiatives?</p>	<p>Coding</p>	<p>RQ</p>
<p>Quite a difficult question to answer.</p> <p>In a simple way, the Arabic language is challenged by a number of factors that range between its status at a language learning levels, its use and usage in society and its future prospects.</p> <p>So when you look at the status of the language or the Arabic language in the way it is introduced to the learner of Arabic and the way this language is progressing and surviving, there are a number of issues. One of them is the fact that compared to the bulk of research that is being made either in language in Arabic or in other original languages, we don't see a lot of the impact of this research in the way the language is being approached as a learning subject.</p> <p>So, there is a challenge in the way the language is taught and the language is acquired and this challenge is also related to a number of reasons, some of them are methodology and the way the language is presented to the learner. It remains a quite difficult subject to the learner. It is a big challenge. It is taught in traditional manners. It is taught in a very structured hard way to be conceived by the learner. The resources available compared to the wealth presented in other languages like in the European languages, Arabic language is struggling in the way it is presented to the learner. Digital resources are quite limited compared to others.</p> <p>In society, in the UAE, although there is a very clearly announced and trend and support for the prominence of the language as part of the culture of the UAE, Arabic as such is not used in a way that makes us comfortable with its status. So, in society, it is only the slogan that is up there. People do not tend to speak the language. There are formats of Arabic that make Arabic itself in a challenging positions, and that is dialect; I don't see dialect as a negative thing, but dialects are different languages adding to the classical Arabic. They are a wealth indeed; however, people who speak the dialect do not compare to the classical Arabic, they do not see it as classical Arabic and they therefore, do not tend speak classical Arabic. So in society there is this element of dialect that really makes it challenging for those who use the language to speak it because dialect is closer, dialect is part of their everyday living. On the other hand, there are issues in society that is very mixed, and there is a tendency for English to overtake, even within the Arabic speaking and the UAE national speaking communities, English is over taking, because it is trendy, it's easier, most of the media use it in terms of tech and all those resources used in the other languages. i.e. English. So Arabic is not in a favor when it comes to communicating in society.</p> <p>What's your view of those initiatives?</p> <p>I think these initiatives have been very big movers boosters, motivations, sources of motivation to millions of Arabs within the UAE and also across the region.</p> <p>So one of them if I may cite the MBR initiative for the Arabic language, the competition, the award, the reading challenge. It is engaging millions of little children, young learners, young readers to read more and to engage with the language. Most of the initiatives so</p>	<p>Issues with the Arabic language include deficient use of research findings in the T&L.</p> <p>T&L of Arabic is traditional.</p> <p>Digital resources are limited in Arabic.</p> <p>The UAE there is a clearly announced trend of support of Arabic as part of the culture of the UAE.</p> <p>Natives tend not to speak the language which makes L1 speakers uncomfortable with its status.</p> <p>Dialects pose challenges to on the language.</p> <p>Prevalence of English is clear.</p> <p>ALI have been great motivations and boosters. The reading challenge engaged millions of little children. They are 'wins' for Arabic.</p> <p>MBR support is significant because he is well trusted.</p>	<p>T&L context</p> <p>Issues with Arabic/context</p> <p>Context</p> <p>Context</p> <p>Context</p> <p>Context</p> <p>RQ1</p> <p>Political context</p>

<p>far are definitely 'wins'. They are winning cases for the Arabic language.</p> <p>Do you think it is significant...MBR?</p> <p>I think the significance I see and the value here is the fact that HH is that he is an icon of this society in the UAE. He is well trusted and these initiatives have been very well supported and funded by himself. It's a huge responsibility and a huge investment from his highness. There are other initiatives that we don't hear of and that are smaller in scale but these are initiatives of scale. I don't think that he is taking all the initiatives, but we know that these big adventures are better announced by big people like SH. MBR.</p> <p>Any role?</p> <p>Not directly, but we know for sure in the public education context that schools across the UAE, I'm talking about the public schools, have been structurally encouraged to engage students in those reading challenge activities throughout the year. For the last 2-3 years, there's a very well planned activity and a number of activities around the reading challenge for example. It's very well approached by schools, it is supported, it is well managed in a way to engage students to read.</p>		
<p><u>Framing the status of the Arabic language for L1 (problematization)</u> <i>Q2 (main)</i></p> <p>Looking at the ALI and the way they were presented as a range of initiatives, charter, projects..., what do they tell you about the status of the teaching and/or learning of the MSA for L1 learners?</p> <p>(i.e. how is the status of Arabic L1 perceived through these ALI?)</p> <p>c. How does the view of the authorities, as reflected in these initiatives, compare to your view of the status of Arabic language for L1 learners? and do the general public see it the same way?</p>		
<p>At the receiving end, the first impression or perception I do have is that of somebody who sees these initiatives as a very positive approach to engage people and encourage them to learn. (paused)</p> <p>Whether this really impacts the status of Arabic, this is the issue. Is this a series of projects because Arabic is in danger? Or because Arabic is being challenged? I think it's a mix.</p> <p>It's always good to support the language and the culture behind it as a perpetual continuous responsibility, as a social and cultural historical responsibility, to have plans and projects in place, and initiatives big initiatives to support the Arabic language, but also there is the element of challenge that the Arabic language faces, and this is more of a geopolitical element in this. And there are all strong reasons to maintain such a flow of initiatives and the way to present them.</p> <p>View of authorities? Compare to your view?</p> <p>Yes. Now if we look at the level of the policy maker, and if we imagine ourselves in their shoes, the question would be what else could they do? Their end of this context, as compared to what should be done really for the sake of the advancement of Arabic for example. And the answer, if I consider myself in their zone, in their shoes, I would say they're doing the best they can. Then the responsibility I think lies heavier on academics, on people working in education, to take the responsibility of a better and stronger approach to the teaching and the learning of Arabic.</p> <p>What do you expect from a politician or a policy maker or a policy leader to do other than a big national regional initiative?</p> <p>Then, it is responsibility of educators or people in education, in the context of a K-12 education whether it is higher ed, it is up to them to contextualize whatever is there for Arabic.</p> <p>Let me give you an example, a little bit of a comparison. If I take one of these big initiatives and go back to the context of how well we're doing at school level, I would say those initiatives are boosters as I said, they are good, however, what is the organic approach to teaching and approaching the teaching of Arabic and learning Arabic? So, example, if you look carefully at the context of schools, k-12</p>	<p>The impression ALI gives is positive and with a tone of engagement of the public.</p> <p>The impact is a question. The participant thinks that ALI is a series of projects because Arabic is in danger and it is being challenged.</p> <p>From their perspective, the authorities are doing the best they can. The subsequent responsibility of execution lies in the hands of the mid layers of authority.</p> <p>The approaches in the T&L are not organically integrated into the system; there is hardly any structured literacy program.</p> <p>The status of Arabic has to be researched.</p>	<p>Assumptions</p> <p>RQ1 Assumptions</p> <p>Assumptions And next steps</p> <p>Context</p> <p>Next steps</p> <p>Context</p>

<p>education, the public sector, there is little to be said about a structured organized literacy program that reinforces from the beginning the acquisition of language.</p> <p>And therefore, we have issues of students falling behind in literacy when they grow older than 10, 11, 12 and so on and the issue continues. This is one area of challenge. And this is not the politicians' level of intervention. It is the educators' and education system level of intervention that is needed to really to be strengthened according to my own views.</p> <p>This is an example of how the status which should be perceived from a distance, and should really be researched.</p> <p>In academia for example, are people teaching teacher education professionals, are they approaching teaching and teaching of languages and teaching of Arabic in a manner that really reflects and impacts once this teacher goes to practice? Are teachers able enough to really meet the needs of those students in learning and acquiring Arabic? I think these are really big issues in academia. I think it is still at a very theoretical level, it's still deep, it's still complex. They're not addressing the very basic needs of learners, and age groups and developmental needs when it comes to language acquisition. It is still taught in a very archaic manner and no matter what we do there's no structured approach, and there's a gap between what we do at university level to prepare the teacher of Arabic, and there's a lot to be done at K-12 level in terms of practice and observing that practice and improving it.</p> <p>Me commenting on lack of college prep.</p> <p>You are right, and the issue of teaching education in the UAE is not only tied to Arabic, it is also the case of all other subjects that are made available at university. College education programs are 1- not renewed for a quite a while. They are not aligned to the pedagogy or the expected pedagogy as we see it now at school level. Therefore, there are issues of wider practice.</p>	<p>The participant thinks that Higher Education practices are not effectively preparing future teachers to help students acquire Arabic literacy.</p> <p>Higher Ed are not preparing teachers well in all disciplines, and not only in Arabic.</p>	<p>Context</p>
<p><u>Wider Context</u></p> <p>Q3 (main)</p> <p>The Arab speaking countries have witnessed different approaches by governmental and non-governmental entities to address the teaching and learning of Arabic as a mother tongue.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> g. What initiatives in other Arabic speaking countries are you aware of? h. What are your opinions of these initiatives? i. How do they compare to those of the UAE? 		
<p>Are you talking about the regional level?</p> <p>I asked more probing questions (what they have done differently to have better outcomes)</p> <p>I don't want to speculate. My knowledge of other systems is limited to an old view of the system that I come from. There are issues responding to this question because I haven't been made aware of a clear set of adopted policies and standards related to Arabic as a subject.</p> <p>I don't see a unified approach to assessing Arabic at an Arab world level, a regional level, and these are challenges. The systems have their own qualification, certifications at a high school and then at a higher education in terms of Arabic.</p> <p>I'm not sure I know of a system that made it to the top with the Arabic language. I think there is an issue across the region regarding the status of Arabic as we speak.</p>	<p>The participants' knowledge about other systems is currently limited.</p> <p>The participant is not aware of clear practices and standards related to Arabic as a subject.</p> <p>None of the systems in the Arab region made it to the top.</p>	<p>Wider context</p>
<p><u>Other approaches</u></p> <p>Q4 (main)</p> <p>Do you feel there is something about the situation of Arabic as L1 that is not being discussed but which we should be discussing?</p> <p>In your opinion, what else can be done to improve the use of the (MSA) the Arabic language as an L1?</p> <p>Do you think there are other ways of seeing the situation of L1 Arabic?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. What do you think influences L1 learners in their choice to use MSA? j. What is your opinion of the Arabic reading challenge? 		

<p>k. Do you feel that the Arabic reading challenge has had an impact? why? /or why not?</p> <p>l. To what extent have the ALI changed the Arabic-speaking public's perceptions of the Arabic language?</p>		
<p>I don't think that there anything new to discuss, yet! What I think needs to take place is the 'seriousness of the right discussion'.</p> <p>You mentioned big initiatives at local and regional level, that do have impacts on millions of people, like the Arabic reading challenge. That discussion really needs to focus on what needs to be done right. And this discussion, and although we were aware, we were part of a number of conversations and discussions and retreats as educators, people of impact, policy makers, to help address the path towards a better Arabic or a better status of the Arabic language. Although there is this political will to support, there is always a barrier where everything stops, and stays idle.</p> <p>It's not, I don't think it's intentional and if it I would be really shocked. We do hold very serious meetings with people at teacher education colleges in the UAE, and those people are really willing to refresh, refurbish their programs. They do request standards, you know in terms of standards, criteria and content, from people who work at the k-12 education sector so that they could align. They make a step towards this and then there is an abrupt, not stop, but there is no coordinated action that is taken from top to bottom or bottom up that really signals the right shift towards the right direction. So we're having all the good conversations about the language, about the status, about what needs to be done, in terms of teacher education and then down the line until we reach the level of the learner and what needs to be done for the learner, for the learner resources, and over the support mechanisms that are needed.</p> <p>But I think there is an overwhelming issue going on that make a straight forward action and call to action for a structured approach to teaching and learning of Arabic less serious. These are the issues. I think they have to do with a lack of leadership element on that exact point.</p> <p>I mean somebody who has the political support, yes you have the political support, you can create finances and resources to fund, but you're waiting and you're not coordinating efforts with other entities, and you're leaving, you're kind of postponing the success of any sort of initiative.</p> <p>We gathered at the beginning of this year a particular project I am proud of because it's kind of an approach that needs to be further developed in-house and not wait for a political decision to come. We created a little literacy program and that literacy program is now meant to be 'the national literacy program'. We've been looking after it and trying to nurture it and learn from the exercise, it's been only one academic year now. We are collecting existing data of attainment of students in public schools from gr.1-7 and we classified those students according to their levels of attainment and we decided that we want to take students who have less than 50% of average in Arabic, and create a program for them, a literacy program for a year.</p> <p>So what we did that based on these basic data, we gave those students a screening assessment which is a baseline which we use as a benchmark 3 times. So as a baseline we gave them an intensive literacy programs support, programs at the beginning of this program. We gave them an intensive week during the winter holiday. We prepared the teachers, we prepared the resources, all tailor-made to the needs we discovered in those assessments, in the baseline, ok. Basic 3 levels of need. We did give teachers some sort of training on the way to approach this program, then we gave the students and the teachers in schools time in term 2 to support their students during the year.</p> <p>We tested the students at the beginning; we tested them after that intensive week, then we tested them at the end of the program by the end of the year, end of April. We are yet to reveal the results. I don't mind sharing it with you, I can share with you all the context of that study.</p> <p>(Me asking if they created the assessment tool).</p>	<p>The participant suggests that everything that needs to be said has been raised, except for a serious enough discussion.</p> <p>The issue is not the political will, that is surely there, but the barriers that this will hit at a certain stage.</p> <p>The participant is elaborating with an example of how well intentioned and serious conversations come to a halt, without action in the right direction.</p> <p>There is a lack of a leadership element at the critical moment when the serious conversations need the right turn/action.</p> <p>The participant detailed an example of a literacy program they planned and are currently piloting, to illustrate that things are doable when you take the right decisions and use the needed tools as an entity, rather than wait for higher level approvals.</p> <p>This is an example of an action taken to address issues in literacy weaknesses in schools, and can be used later at a larger scale.</p> <p>Leadership is needed to guarantee sustainability.</p>	<p>Alternative issues</p> <p>Next steps</p> <p>Next steps</p> <p>Next steps</p> <p>Elaborating on previous/ RQ1 / next steps</p>

<p>Yes there was a whole assessment tool. It started from visual site words, the most frequent site words, a number of site words and a running record of reading and a short comprehension reading task, with a few questions, and the reading is a reading aloud is, the running records are timed, and when a student passes a level from the sight words and the running record to the reading, so if you pass you go to the next levels. If not you would stay with that level. So that's what we did. We used the same assessment tool with the same text and same resources during the 3 phases, the diagnostic phase, the check-up phase, and the final one.</p> <p>Me seeking clarification: (commenting on how things reach a halt at the execution level) Absolutely that! To my knowledge, it's a leadership issue. They do see the necessity of supporting Arabic, but no further action, like for example, I mentioned this literacy project as a part of an internal will to support the vision for a better status of Arabic. However, if this is left without any further leadership, this cannot continue, it just falters. And there are PLENTY of initiatives at school level and so on and so on, you never hear of that take place, but we don't know what to do so that it sustains. How many schools does this project involve? The target was every child who is struggling with Arabic from gr.2 to 7. The students' targets for this program exist in a 151 schools. All the students in this category exist in a 151 schools. They are cycle 1 schools (primary) and they are middle schools, or cycle 1 and middle schools combined.</p>		
<p><u>Impact of ALI</u> Q5 (main) In your opinion, what do you think the impact of these ALI on:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 9. Teachers of Arabic as L1? 10. Learners of Arabic as L1? 11. Curriculum for teaching Arabic as L1? 12. Pedagogy for teaching Arabic as L1? <p>Q5: To what extent are people influenced by popular discussions about L1 Arabic, e.g. in the media? What are the effects of these initiatives of the UAE on other Arab speaking countries in the region?</p>		
<p>Me probing: so have they created some shift, some movement in those categories?</p> <p>I'm not aware whether any of these initiatives have been studied to respond to the questions properly.</p> <p>Me: I'm not looking for statistical measures, but I'm looking for and interested in implications. What did they create?</p> <p>I believe that in the least, or the least we can say, these initiatives do have impact on the people who have been involved in them. I could see in many schools a shift or a movement towards encouraging students to read. Yet, I'm not aware of whether this encouragement came in a structured manner to support reading and comprehension, elaborating on reading, reflecting on reading, expressing the reading, communicating the reading, sharing the ideas, except for the competition itself. I mean you could see a child reading 200 books, and writing 200 paragraphs about those books. There's a lot to be done about reading, on reading, for reading and with others that we are not aware of and that might be taking place. I would expect the impact to be as such. This is one element to the answer. The second element is I'm not quite sure whether there is a direct impact on teacher practice of those initiatives unless the teacher is involved, because we could see students in schools across the country coming under the chaperonship of teacher or two or three, maybe those teachers are involved in encouraging the students in supporting the initiatives. My concern is how consistent is the approach when it comes to supporting the teacher to do this exercise, support the child, or the</p>	<p>The ALI do have implications on learners at the level of encouraging reading, but not further to touch on reading literacy outcomes.</p> <p>The impact of ALI seen as motivated reading involves only those students who participated, not more.</p> <p>Similarly, only teachers who were involved had to change their pedagogy or improve their strategies.</p> <p>The participant is concerned about the consistency of ALI.</p> <p>The ideal thing would be if one takes an ALI (national level) and contextualizes it to their needs.</p>	<p>RQ1</p> <p>RQ1</p> <p>RQ2</p> <p>Next steps</p> <p>Next steps</p> <p>Assumptions/ Next steps</p>

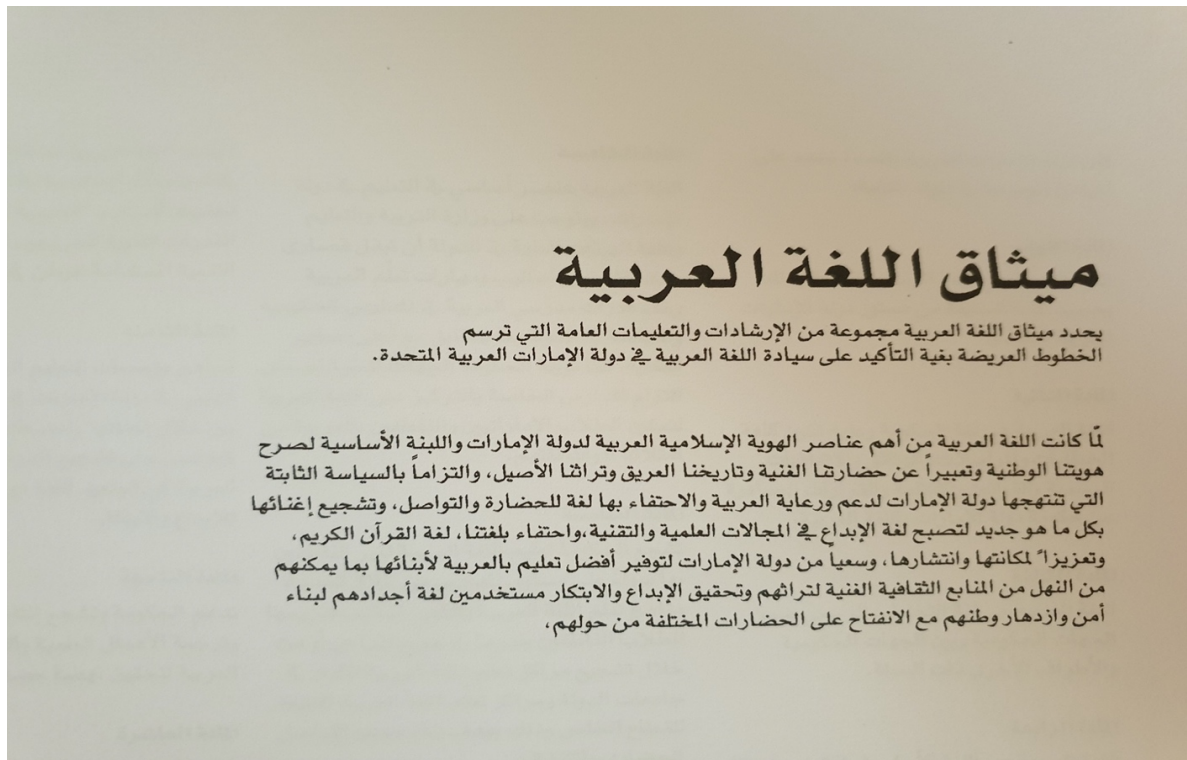
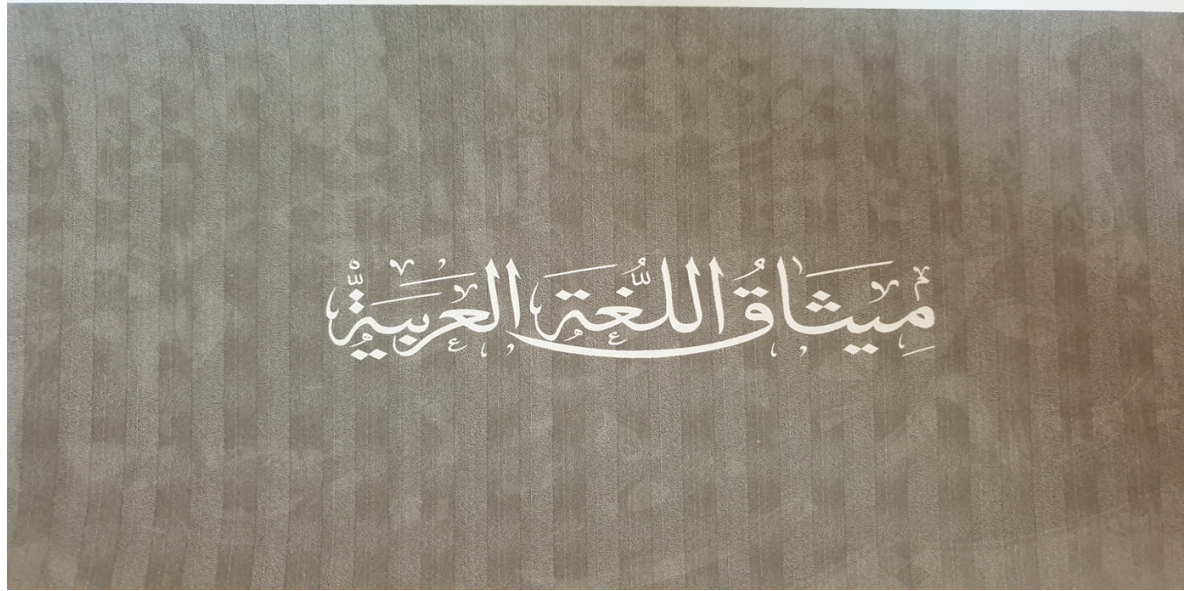
<p>number of teachers across the school, or across a number of schools or across the network itself.</p> <p>Whether and as I mentioned, I don't know whether the initiatives themselves would take this responsibility to go down to the bottom and then up to support the process, but also I would say in a professional context, if you take a level national initiatives and contextualize it to the needs to the way you do things, that would be the ideal thing. And it's up to educators in schools to translate the bit aims and the big intended outcomes of those big initiatives into what is really tangible and that's what needs probably our research.</p> <p>..influenced by the discussion around Arabic, the people, the public...? Yes, look, I would like to see impact in actions. I do sincerely feel that people have feelings for their own language. They do support it, they love it, it's a cultural element, it's a spiritual element, it's rooted in their own lives. But that feeling is often not translated in the right action to be taken.</p> <p>The media would play a role, and education certainly plays a role, whether I would see the private sector in Dubai flourishing because there is a particular focus on Arabic and the status of Arabic by law. And that's a good move. This kind of motivation or direction is not so much needed in the public domain because in the public domain it is taken for granted that the language is important, but what is not being done is the right thing towards the acquisition of the language in terms of the way the curriculum...i'm not being here exclusive to an extent, there are huge efforts done at a curriculum level for the last 3 years, and we know people are working very hard to improve the content of the curriculum itself, however, teacher readiness, teacher training, teacher expertise are key to improve all these related elements at the delivery level.</p>	<p>The country is fully emotionally ideologically supportive of Arabic, but this is not translated to action.</p> <p>The participant emphasized the differences in context between private schools and public schools in terms of the drive towards Arabic.</p> <p>What Dubai has done in private schools (ALI) is a good move. But the same is not true of the public sector.</p> <p>The public sector has witnessed curricular improvements, but still lacking the elements of teacher preparation.</p>	<p>Context</p> <p>RQ2</p> <p>Next steps</p>
<p><u>Future approaches to Arabic L1 policy</u></p> <p>Q6 (main)</p> <p>Under which conditions would the teaching and learning of the MSA by L1 learners work best?</p> <p>What types of policies would you like to see Arab governments adopting to improve the teaching and curriculum planning of Arabic for L1 learners?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> e. How do you think we could improve the way we support the teaching of Arabic? f. How can we develop workable approaches for the teaching and/or use of the MSA by L1 learners? 		
<p>What policies?</p> <p>I would like to see governments more stringent on the way they set expectations from students' Arabic attainment at different milestones in their K-12 career. For example, I would like governments to be very serious about student readiness or literacy readiness whether it is Arabic or any other language because this kind of acquisition is targeted at the language as a knowledge as a source of knowledge and a medium because if you don't develop it at that level there is nothing that can be done properly at the other levels.</p> <p>So although this situation is alarming in terms of students levels and proficiency levels in Arabic, there is little done on expectations from the system and from schools and from the leadership and from the teachers on how well those students are being made ready in terms of language. So, I think from policy level, to the level where you monitor that policy and implementation of that policy there needs to be a stronger take, there needs to be more serious accountability level that is put at different levels of the strategy, at school level, at teacher level.</p> <p>It is quite hard to influence, you know, we're talking about parents and the culture and it's not given. Yeah these are initiatives and efforts you can always make, but you really need to address this with the beneficiary who's the 'learner' directly in a proper consistent manner.</p> <p>So at policy level, I think every country in the Arab region needs to have a clear literacy program that takes a child from any level, whether it's a struggling level or an advanced level, it takes the child where he is and sports him or her throughout this career to achieve a certain level of proficiency.</p>	<p>More stringent government policies around students' outcomes in Arabic.</p> <p>The entire system at the level of students, schools, teachers and leadership need to be more serious about the alarming situation in Arabic.</p> <p>The policies need to be closer to the realities of learners</p> <p>The other key policy priority is a vision for a framework of standards that is unified for all Arab countries.</p>	<p>Next steps</p> <p>Next steps</p> <p>Next steps</p> <p>Next steps</p>

<p>I think the other context at policy level should be a unified vision for a framework of standards of what is minimal as a requirement for the learner. I know it's not easy but it has been achieved in other languages but there is no consensus in our region about the context of the Arabic language, especially that it is only needed in certain levels of practice at post high school, and so on and so forth, so it's not the language as a medium of survival in a professional career for everybody. It's something for somebody who's doing something related to Arabic itself, or Islamic education or culture at a minimum level, and that's the status, is not for us to solve now, but the right thing to do is at least unify the region's vision from academics to policy makers to the status of Arabic, a standardized national, let's say, Arab national assessment would be a good one. So that we know exactly how well our students would be doing at regional level. A comparative study would be helpful, you know, like what OECD does to support its 36 countries in Europe as well as participating countries. We don't have something that unites us of that caliber.</p>	<p>Work needs to be done in that regard at the level of for example OECD, to put an effort at a country level with comparative research.</p>	
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APPENDIX I

SAMPLES OF FULL TEXTS OF THE ARABIC LANGUAGE INITIATIVES (ALI) OF THE UAE

ALI-1 / Arabic Language Charter



المادة الحادية عشر

توجه الحكومة الجهات المعنية في القطاع الاقتصادي والأعمال التجارية لاستخدام اللغة العربية وبشكل صحيح في تقديم كافة المعلومات الخاصة بالمنتجات الاستهلاكية المتداولة في دولة الإمارات باللغة العربية بشكل أساسي إلى جانب اللغات الأخرى.

المادة الثانية عشر

تقوم المؤسسات الإعلامية المرئية والسموعة بتقديم برامجها باللغة العربية الفصحى، مما أمكن مع التركيز على إنتاج البرامج الموجهة للأطفال باللغة العربية الفصحى بقية تعزيز استخدام اللغة العربية بشكل سليم.

المادة الثالثة عشر

تقوم كافة الجهات الحكومية المدنية بصفة وتطبيق سياساتها وفوائدها وأنظمتها بما يضمن تطبيق مواد هذا الميثاق وذلك ضمن مهام كل منها.

اعتبار اللغة العربية متطلباً أساسياً في الدراسة

في الجامعات الحكومية في الدولة مع التركيز على تحديث الأساليب التعليمية بالمرية بما يفي القدرات اللغوية للخريجين للإسهام في تحقيق التنمية المستدامة للوطن في المستقبل.

المادة الثامنة

تساهم مؤسسات التعليم العالي ومراكز البحث العلمي في دولة الإمارات في التوسع باللغة العربية من خلال إغنائها بالمصطلحات العلمية والتقنية كما تعمل على تشجيع الدراسات والأبحاث اللغوية العربية كي تستعيد اللغة دورها التاريخي لغة للإبداع والابتكار.

المادة التاسعة

تدعم الحكومة وتشجع إنتاج المحتوى العربي وترجمة الأعمال العلمية والأدبية العالية إلى اللغة العربية لتحقيق نهضة حضارية مستدامة.

المادة العاشرة

تشجع الحكومة التمايزات الثقافية والفنية والأنشطة والمبادرات التي تسهم في التوسع باللغة العربية.

المادة الخامسة

اللغة العربية عنصر أساسي في التعليم في دولة الإمارات، ويتوجب على وزارة التربية والتعليم وكافة الهيئات المعنية في الدولة أن يتبادل قصارى جهدها لتطوير أساليب وممارسات تعلم العربية وبناء قدرات مدرسي العربية في المدارس الحكومية والخاصة في الدولة بما يتطابق مع أعلى المعايير العالمية، كما توجه الحكومة الجهات المعنية لضمان التزام المدارس الخاصة بالتركيز على اللغة العربية لتمكين الطلاب الإماراتيين والناطقين بالعربية من امتلاك أدوات لفهم.

المادة السادسة

تشجع الحكومة تعليم اللغة العربية لغير الناطقين بها سواءً على مستوى المدارس من خلال تحديث مناهج تعليم اللغة العربية وتطوير أساليب تدريسها للطلاب الناطقين بغيرها في جميع المراحل أو من خلال تشجيع مراكز تعلم اللغة العربية للكتاب في جامعات الدولة ومراكز تعليم اللغة العربية التابعة للقطاع الخاص وذلك بهدف بناء جسور التواصل الحضاري والثقافي.

المادة السابعة

توجه الحكومة المؤسسات المدنية بالتعليم العالي

فإن دولة الإمارات العربية المتحدة تشدد على

المبادئ الموضحة في المواد التالية:

المادة الأولى

اللغة العربية هي اللغة الرسمية للدولة وذلك بحسب المادة السابعة من دستور دولة الإمارات العربية المتحدة.

المادة الثانية

اللغة العربية هي لغة الحكومة وعليه تكون كافة الخطابات والمراسلات والوثائق والاتفاقيات الرسمية والتوانين والأنظمة والقرارات الصادرة عن حكومة دولة الإمارات باللغة العربية.

المادة الثالثة

اللغة العربية هي لغة التخاطب الرسمي ضمن الجهات الحكومية وبين الجهات الحكومية والأطراف الأخرى ذات الصلة.

المادة الرابعة

اللغة العربية هي اللغة الأساسية في الخدمات التي تقدمها الجهات الحكومية مع إتاحة هذه الخدمات بلغات أخرى لغير الناطقين بالعربية عند الحاجة.

ALI-3 / Arabic Reading Challenge (Retrieved from: Arab Reading Challenge 2019)

The Arab Reading Challenge (ARC) is the largest-ever Arab literacy initiative. Launched by His UAE Vice President and Prime Minister of the and Ruler of Dubai Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum to encourage students to read, ARC challenges students to read as many books as possible (over 50) in one academic year.

The challenge is an Arabic reading competition with participating students from Years 1 to 12 from schools across the Arab world. The competition starts every year in September until the end of March. Students work through five stages of the competition reading ten books and summarising their content in the challenge passports. Upon completion of the reading and summarising, the final stage of elimination commences according to set criteria. The eliminations are done amongst schools, education zones and Arab countries until the finals which are held annually in Dubai in October.

The purpose of the Arab Reading Challenge

The challenge is an Arabic reading competition with participating students from Years 1 to 12 from schools across the Arab world. The competition starts every year in September until the end of March. Students work through five stages of the competition reading ten books and summarising their content in the challenge passports. Upon completion of the reading and summarising, the final stage of elimination commences according to set criteria. The eliminations are done amongst schools, education zones and Arab countries until the finals which are held annually in Dubai in October.

Aims of the Arab Reading Challenge is to:

Raise awareness of the importance of reading among students and youth in the Arab World.
Improve Arabic language skills, including fluency and eloquence in Arabic speech.
Develop self-learning, analytical and critical thinking.
Skills, and broaden understanding and comprehension. Develop emotional and intellectual intelligence.

Promote cultural awareness among students.
Build a network of young Arab readers and facilitate the communication between them to build Arab cultural gatherings.
Promote patriotism and Arabism, and the feeling of belonging to one nation.

ALI-8 / UAE Federal Law of Reading (18/ 2016)

مرسوم بقانون اتحادي رقم (18) لسنة 2016 في شأن القراءة

- نحن خليفة بن زايد آل نهيان
رئيس دولة الإمارات العربية المتحدة،
- بعد الاطلاع على الدستور،
 - وعلى القانون الاتحادي رقم (1) لسنة 1972، بشأن اختصاصات الوزارات وصلاحيات الوزراء، وتعديلاته،
 - وبناءً على موافقة مجلس الوزراء،
- أصدرنا المرسوم بقانون الآتي:

الفصل الأول

أحكام عامة

المادة (1)

تمريعات

في تطبيق أحكام هذا المرسوم بقانون، يقصد بالكلمات والعبارات التالية المعاني المبينة قرين كل منها، ما لم يقض سياق النص بغير ذلك:

- الدولة : الإمارات العربية المتحدة.
- الجهات الحكومية : كافة الجهات الحكومية الاتحادية والمحلية في الدولة.
- مواد القراءة : كافة المواد المطبوعة، بما في ذلك الكتب والمجلات والموسوعات والأدلة والدوريات، بالإضافة إلى المواد السمعية والرقمية، والمواد المخصصة لذوي التحديات في القراءة.
- المكتبة العامة : مؤسسة ثقافية تابعة لجهة حكومية، تهدف إلى تمكين الجمهور من الوصول إلى مواد القراءة.
- دور النشر الوطنية : المنشآت التي تتولى إعداد المطبوعات وإنتاجها وبيعها، والمملوكة لمواطني الدولة.
- الشخص ذو التحديات في القراءة : أي شخص غير قادر على استخدام بعض مواد القراءة أو جميعها بسبب إعاقته الحسية، مثل الإعاقة البصرية أو السمعية أو إعاقته الذهنية أو لتعرضه لعسر القراءة.

- الإيداع القانوني : الالتزام الذي يفرضه المرسوم بقانون على كافة دور النشر بإيداع نسخة واحدة أو عدة نسخ لدى المكتبة الوطنية.
- الحقبة المعرفية : حقبة تحوي مجموعة من مواد القراءة تركز على الجانب المعرفي والعقلي للطفل، وتمنح دون مقابل مادي للأباء والأمهات.
- المنشأة التعليمية : مؤسسة مرخصة للعمل في مجال التعليم في الدولة أو المناطق الحرة مثل المدرسة أو المعهد أو الكلية أو الجامعة.
- مجتمعات المعرفة : مجموعات مختلفة تتشكل من عدة أفراد ذوي اهتمامات متشابهة بغرض تجميع المعارف التي يمتلكونها بهدف مشاركتها والوصول لمعارف جديدة.

المادة (2)

أهداف المرسوم بقانون

يهدف هذا المرسوم بقانون إلى تحقيق ما يأتي:

1. دعم تنمية رأس المال البشري والمساهمة في بناء القدرات الذهنية والمعرفية وتطويرها لدى كافة أفراد المجتمع.
2. ترسيخ سلوك وثقافة القراءة لدى كافة أفراد المجتمع وتهيئة سبل التعلم مدى الحياة.
3. دعم الإنتاج الفكري الوطني وبناء مجتمعات المعرفة في الدولة.
4. ضمان استدامة كافة الجهود الحكومية لترسيخ القراءة في الدولة، وذلك من خلال تحديد المسؤوليات الرئيسية للجهات الحكومية في هذا المجال.

المادة (3)

نطاق السريان

تسري أحكام هذا المرسوم بقانون على كافة الجهات الحكومية التي تتولى مسؤولية حماية حق القراءة وتعزيزه وتسهيل نشر مواد القراءة.

المادة (4)

المبادئ التوجيهية السبعة

يراعى عند تنفيذ أحكام هذا المرسوم بقانون المبادئ التوجيهية الآتية:

1. تتبع القراءة من صميم المبادئ الإسلامية والموروث الثقافي والحضاري للدولة، وتمثل قيمة أساسية من قيم مجتمع الدولة.
2. القراءة هي العنصر الأساسي لتحقيق العلم وتعزيز الإبداع الفكري وبناء مجتمع قائم على المعرفة.
3. تمثل القراءة العامل الرئيسي لتطوير وإنماء الرصيد الثقافي الوطني، ودعم الإنتاج الأدبي والفكري بالدولة.
4. تعتبر القراءة مُمَكِّنًا أساسياً للقدرة التنافسية والإنتاجية للدولة وتطورها الاقتصادي.
5. تُعد القراءة المدخل الأساسي لتعزيز قيم التسامح والسلام والتعايش في مجتمع الدولة ومع المجتمعات والثقافات الأخرى.
6. القراءة حق لكافة فئات أفراد المجتمع، وخصوصاً الأطفال في مرحلة الطفولة المبكرة لما لها من أهمية في تشكيل القدرات الذهنية لهم.
7. يأتي حق الإنسان في القراءة معززاً للحقوق الأخرى ذات الصلة التي تكفلها الدولة وفقاً للتشريعات النافذة في شأنها، وهي:
 - أ. الحق في التعليم وتنمية مهارات القراءة والكتابة.
 - ب. الحق في الملكية الفكرية.
 - ج. الحق الثقافي من خلال إنتاج محتوى ثقافي والاستمتاع به.

الفصل الثاني

تعزيز القراءة

المادة (5)

الحق في القراءة

على الجهات الحكومية المعنية اتخاذ كافة الإجراءات اللازمة لضمان إتاحة الفرصة لجميع الأطفال لتعلم كيفية القراءة كجزء من نظام التعليم الأساسي وتوفير الفرص المناسبة لكافة أفراد المجتمع بما في ذلك الأشخاص ذوي التحديات في القراءة لتعزيز مهارات القراءة وتوفير مواد القراءة.

المادة (6)

تمكين القراءة في المجتمع

1. تعمل الجهات الحكومية المعنية في القطاعين الصحي والتعليمي في الدولة على تطوير القدرات اللغوية للأطفال في المراحل العمرية المبكرة، ورفع وعي الأسر بأهمية القراءة للمواليد الجدد والأطفال.
2. تُوفّر وزارة الصحة ووقاية المجتمع والجهات الحكومية المعنية في القطاع الصحي لكل طفل في الدولة ثلاث حقائب معرفية، يتم توزيعها في المدد التي تحددها الوزارة أو الجهة الحكومية المعنية .
3. تضع الجهات الحكومية المعنية البرامج اللازمة لتعزيز مهارات القراءة لدى فئات المجتمع ذات الاعتبارات الخاصة شاملة الأشخاص ذوي التحديات في القراءة ونزلاء المنشآت الإصلاحية والمستشفيات وكبار السن وريبات المنازل وتشجيعهم على ممارسة القراءة بما يناسب احتياجاتهم.
4. تضع الجهات الحكومية المعنية الآليات المناسبة لاستخدام المراكز الثقافية والمكتبات والمجالس في الأحياء السكنية.
5. تُشجّع وزارة تنمية المجتمع والجهات الحكومية المعنية في قطاع التنمية الاجتماعية ثقافة التطوع المعرفي من خلال إشراك مختلف فئات المجتمع في الترويج للقراءة والمشاركة في القراءة للأطفال وكبار السن والمرضى وغيرهم من الذين يعجزون عن القراءة.
6. تعمل وزارة الاقتصاد والجهات الحكومية المعنية بإلزام المقاهي الموجودة في المراكز التجارية بتوفير مواد القراءة بما يناسب عدد العملاء واهتماماتهم، وذلك وفق المعايير التي تحددها السلطات المختصة.

المادة (7)

القراءة في النظام التعليمي

تتولى وزارة التربية والتعليم والجهات الحكومية المعنية بقطاع التعليم ما يأتي:

1. تطوير المناهج والأنظمة التعليمية بما يسهم في تعزيز سلوك ومهارات القراءة لدى الطلبة.
2. إلزام المنشآت التعليمية الخاصة بتطوير منهاجها الدراسية، على النحو الذي يُمكن الطلبة من تطوير قدراتهم اللغوية.
3. إلزام كافة المنشآت التعليمية بتوفير مكتبات تتناسب مع الاحتياجات التعليمية واهتمامات كافة الطلبة المنتسبين لها.
4. وضع معايير لولية لتقييم المكتبات في المنشآت التعليمية، والإشراف على تطبيقها من المنشآت التعليمية بصورة تدريجية.
5. إلزام كافة المنشآت التعليمية بوضع خطة سنوية لتشجيع القراءة بين الطلبة وتنظيم أنشطة في هذا الشأن،

- لترسيخ سلوك القراءة لديهم.
6. إلزام المنشآت التعليمية بوضع برامج لتطوير مهارات المعنيين بالقراءة من العاملين لديها، وذلك وفق أفضل الممارسات التربوية في هذا المجال.
7. اعتماد ثقافة وسلوك القراءة ضمن المعايير الخاصة بتقييم المنشآت التعليمية.
8. وضع الأنظمة اللازمة لإجراء التقييم المستمر للقدرات اللغوية والذهنية للطلبة.
9. غرس ثقافة احترام الكتاب والحفاظ عليه بين الطلبة، ووضع الإجراءات اللازمة لإعادة استخدامه أو تدويره أو التبرع به.

المادة (8)

القراءة في محيط العمل

- تلتزم الجهات الحكومية المعنية بقطاع الموارد البشرية بما يأتي:
1. تمكين الموظف من الحصول على وقت للقراءة التخصصية في مجال عمله، على أن يكون ضمن ساعات العمل الرسمية.
 2. اتخاذ التدابير اللازمة لدعم أنشطة القراءة وتبادل المعارف والخبرات في محيط العمل.
 3. توفير الفرص للموظفين للحصول على مواد القراءة التخصصية المطبوعة أو الالكترونية المناسبة.

الفصل الثالث

المكتبات ومواد القراءة

المادة (9)

المكتبات العامة

1. تسعى الجهات الحكومية المعنية إلى توفير مكتبات عامة أو مرافق للقراءة في مختلف مناطق الدولة بما يكفل سهولة الوصول إليها.
2. توفر الجهات المختصة بإدارة المكتبات العامة الخدمات التالية بصورة مجانية لكافة أفراد المجتمع، ويجوز لها تحديد رسوم رمزية مناسبة للخدمات الأخرى:
 - أ. استخدام مرافق المكتبة.
 - ب. استعارة الكتب.
 - ج. استخدام الشبكة الإلكترونية والمعلومات الرقمية.

3. تضع الجهات المختصة بإدارة المكتبات العامة الآليات المناسبة لضمان إمكانية استخدام مرافق القراءة طيلة أيام الأسبوع وساعات ممتدة.
4. تعمل الجهات المختصة بإدارة المكتبات العامة على إعادة تصميمها بصورة جاذبة كمراكز خدمية وترفيهية من خلال تطوير أنظمتها بالإضافة إلى تحديث وتنويع المحتوى ليناسب اهتمامات كافة فئات المجتمع باختلاف فئاتهم العمرية واللغتين العربية والإنجليزية.
5. تحفز الجهات الحكومية المعنية القطاع الخاص على الاستثمار في إنشاء المكتبات والمراكز الثقافية من خلال منحه مجموعة من الحوافز والتسهيلات والأراضي المناسبة، وبما يتوافق مع أولويات الاستثمار والتخطيط العمراني في مختلف مناطق الدولة.
6. تحفز الجهات الحكومية المعنية مراكز التسوق على توفير مساحات تجارية بأسعار تنافسية لمشاريع المكتبات العامة في مراكز التسوق.
7. تعمل الجهات الحكومية المعنية على أن تكون المكتبات العامة مناسبة لاستخدام الأشخاص ذوي احتياجات القراءة وذوي الإعاقة الحركية، سواء من حيث المحتوى أو المرافق أو وسائل القراءة.
8. تضع الجهات المختصة بإدارة المكتبات العامة معايير لاعتماد المرشحين لوظيفة أمين المكتبة، وتسعى كذلك لتطوير كفاءات موظفيها بما يضمن استيفاء تلك المعايير.
9. تتولى وزارة الثقافة وتنمية المعرفة إنشاء قاعدة بيانات شاملة وموحدة للمكتبات العامة في الدولة، وما تحويه تلك المكتبات من كتب بالإضافة إلى المكتبات التابعة للمؤسسات العامة، وتلتزم المكتبات التي تنطبق عليها الشروط بالتسجيل وفق ما تحدده وزارة الثقافة وتنمية المعرفة.
10. تعمل وزارة الثقافة وتنمية المعرفة على تأسيس مكتبة وطنية تمثل أرشيف فكري لحفظ وأرشفة الإنتاج الفكري المقروء في الدولة من التلف والضياع وإتاحته للجمهور والأجيال القادمة.
11. تلتزم دور النشر الوطنية بتقديم ثلاث نسخ من كل كتاب منشور في الدولة إلى المكتبة الوطنية لغرض الإيداع القانوني أو نسخة إلكترونية لكل منتج آخر من مواد القراءة.

المادة (10)

دعم نشر مواد القراءة وتوزيعها

1. تعامل مواد القراءة في الدولة كملعة رئيسية تعفى من أي رسوم أو ضرائب لغايات التأليف أو النشر أو الطباعة أو التوزيع بما في ذلك رسوم الحصول على الرقم المعياري الدولي الموحد للكتب (ISBN)، وذلك وفقاً للشروط والضوابط التي يضعها مجلس الوزراء في هذا الشأن.

2. لا يجوز الترخيص بالنشر أو التوزيع لأي كتاب دون أن يكون حاصلاً على الرقم المعياري الدولي الموحد للكتب (ISBN).
3. يتولى كل من المجلس الوطني للإعلام ووزارة الثقافة وتنمية المعرفة ووزارة الاقتصاد وضع برنامج لتطوير صناعة النشر في الدولة، وسن السياسات التي من شأنها إثراء محتوى القراءة باللغة العربية وإنتاج كتب وطنية فكرية وجودة عالية.
4. يتولى كل من المجلس الوطني للإعلام ووزارة الثقافة وتنمية المعرفة ووزارة الاقتصاد دعم وتوفير حوافز وتسهيلات للمؤلفين والمحررين ودور النشر ودور الطباعة في الدولة.
5. تتولى وزارة الثقافة وتنمية المعرفة وضع الخطط ومنح التمويل اللازم لدعم نشر مواد القراءة وتوزيعها بما يتناسب واحتياجات الأشخاص ذوي التحديات في القراءة.
6. تتولى وزارة التربية والتعليم بالتعاون مع وزارة الثقافة وتنمية المعرفة وضع برامج التطوير المهني المتخصصة للأشخاص الراغبين في التخصص كأمناء مكتبات أو ناشرين أو محررين أو غيرها من الأنشطة ذات الصلة بتعزيز القراءة.
7. تعمل وزارة التربية والتعليم على طرح وتشجيع برامج أكاديمية متخصصة في صناعة النشر وإدارة المكتبات.
8. تعمل وزارة الثقافة وتنمية المعرفة على تشجيع إصدار أو نشر مواد القراءة باللغة العربية من خلال تقديم الدعم والحوافز في نقل المعارف من اللغات المختلفة إلى اللغة العربية.
9. تمنح وزارة الثقافة وتنمية المعرفة التسهيلات وتقديم المشورة والدعم للترويج للمحتوى الوطني خارج الدولة والمشاركة في المعارض الدولية.
10. تلتزم الجهات المعنية بتنظيم وإدارة المعارض في الدولة بتوفير معاملة تفضيلية لدور النشر الوطنية عند مشاركتها أو تأجيرها لمساحات العرض.
11. تعمل وزارة الاقتصاد والجهات الحكومية المعنية على تضمين شرط توفير قسم لمواد القراءة المنتجة محلياً في تراخيص دور بيع الكتب بالدولة.

الفصل الرابع الأنظمة الداعمة للقراءة

المادة (11)

دور الإعلام

1. يتولى المجلس الوطني للإعلام مسؤولية وضع سياسة إعلامية متكاملة لدعم وتشجيع القراءة والزام وسائل الإعلام العامة المرئية والسمعية والمقروءة، بتخصيص برامج ومساحات محددة تناسب كافة فئات المجتمع المختلفة لتشجيع على القراءة.
2. يعمل المجلس الوطني للإعلام مع القطاع الخاص كشريك استراتيجي على الترويج للقراءة من خلال الرسائل المباشرة والضمنية وإنتاج الرسائل الإعلامية الموحدة لتنمية الحس المجتمعي باعتبار القراءة قيمة أصيلة في المجتمع الإماراتي.

المادة (12)

الصندوق الوطني للقراءة

1. ينشأ صندوق مالي يُسمى "الصندوق الوطني للقراءة" وذلك لتوفير الدعم المالي للمبادرات المبتكرة التي من شأنها ترسيخ القراءة.
2. يصدر مجلس الوزراء لائحة تحدد رأس مال الصندوق ومصادر التمويل وتبعيته وأسلوب إدارته وتعيين مجلس إدارته وتحديد أوجه الصرف منه، وذلك لتعزيز:
 - أ. مشاريع دعم القراءة والكتابة المقدمة من قبل الأفراد والمؤسسات الخاصة وغير الهادفة للربح.
 - ب. الأبحاث المتعلقة بالقراءة والإنتاج الأدبي وتعميم الكتب والمكتبات.
 - ج. دعم المبادرات الوطنية الأدبية الإبداعية.
 - د. دعم أصحاب المهارات الثقافية والأدبية من مواطني الدولة لتعزيز إنتاج المحتوى الوطني الفكري وتحديد جوائز تكريمية سنوية للمتميزين منهم.
3. يحق للصندوق الوطني للقراءة تلقي الدعم المالي من كافة الجهات الحكومية والخاصة والهيئات والتبرعات من الأفراد والمؤسسات، وفقاً للضوابط التي ينص عليها قرار إنشاء الصندوق.

المادة (13)

الشهر الوطني للقراءة

1. يُخصّص مجلس الوزراء شهراً وطنياً من كل عام للقراءة، وذلك لحث المجتمع على القراءة كجزء من أنشطته اليومية، وحثه على المشاركة الفعالة في ترسيخ ثقافة القراءة.
2. تلتزم المنشآت التعليمية بالمشاركة في فعاليات الشهر الوطني للقراءة.

الفصل الخامس

آليات تطبيق المرسوم بقانون

المادة (14)

الخطة الوطنية للقراءة

1. يعتمد مجلس الوزراء خطة وطنية عشرية للقراءة يشار إليها "بالخطة الوطنية للقراءة" ويتم متابعة تنفيذها من الجهات الحكومية المعنية.
2. يجب على كافة الجهات الحكومية مواءمة استراتيجياتها بما يتناسب مع الخطة الوطنية للقراءة المعتمدة من مجلس الوزراء.
3. تقوم الجهات الحكومية المعنية بوضع خطط سنوية تفصيلية لتنفيذ مبادرات الخطة الوطنية للقراءة، وبما يتناسب مع أحكام هذا المرسوم بقانون.

المادة (15)

إنشاء لجنة تنفيذ المرسوم بقانون

يجوز لمجلس الوزراء أن يُشكّل لجنة أو أكثر للإشراف على تنفيذ أحكام هذا المرسوم بقانون بعضوية ممثلين من الجهات الحكومية المعنية

الفصل السادس

الأحكام الختامية

المادة (16)

الوائح والقرارات التنفيذية

يصدر مجلس الوزراء اللوائح والقرارات التنظيمية اللازمة لتنفيذ أحكام هذا المرسوم بقانون.

المادة (17)

الإلغاءات

يُلغى كل حكم يخالف أو يتعارض مع أحكام هذا المرسوم بقانون.

المادة (18)

النشر والسريان

يُنشر هذا المرسوم بقانون في الجريدة الرسمية، ويُعمل به من اليوم التالي لتاريخ نشره.

خليفة بن زايد آل نهيان
رئيس دولة الإمارات العربية المتحدة

صدر عنا في قصر الرئاسة بإبوظبي:

تاريخ: 24 ذي الحجة 1438هـ

الموافق: 25 سبتمبر 2016م